"So Many Bad Films... So Few Brain Cells..."

Trashfiend

Disposable horror fare of the 1960s & 1970s

Volume One

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www.headpress.com

Trashfiend

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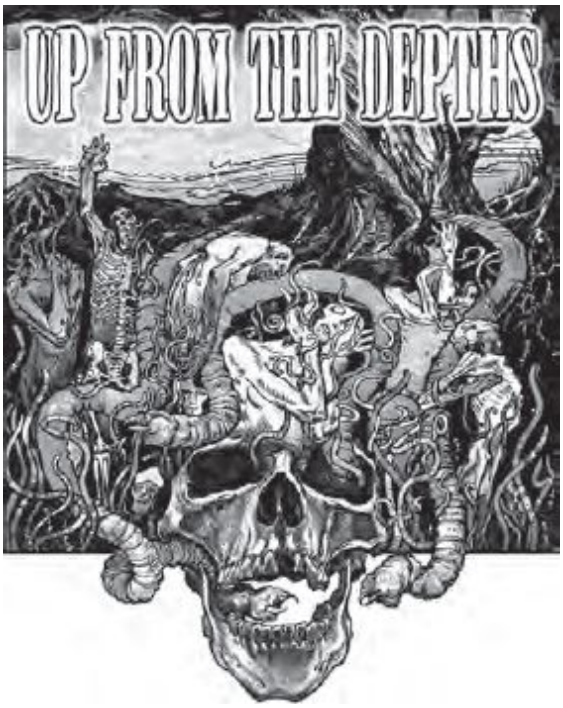


IN SPRING OF 2002, I self published the first issue of *Trashfiend* under my Stigmata Press imprint, a forty eight page tribute to 'Horror & Exploitation Fare from the 1960s & 1970s.' With a modest print run of 2,000 copies, and sporting an underexposed but garish full color cover, *Trashfiend* picked up where its predecessor *GICK!* left off the previous year. Although far more comprehensive than the earlier incarnation, the primary thing that set *Trashfiend* apart was its unwavering devotion to media that left the greatest impression on me as a child. I had grown tired of more recent fare, which had become evident in the gradual decline of post 1980 coverage in *GICK!* (When I did review such films, I rarely had anything good to say about them… unless, of course, they were throwbacks to the stuff that made up the cinematic soundtrack of my youth.) If any incarnation of the magazine were to survive, I *had* to be inspired by or at least marginally interested in the material covered within its pages. Even if many of the films and comics I wrote about were, well, trash, at least it was trash that was near and dear to my heart.

In the editorial that kicked off the first issue of *Trashfiend*, I made a sincere but ultimately feeble attempt to explain the main impetus behind the

magazine's conception: nostalgia. But it wasn't until I was wrapping up this book that I found myself one step closer to truly understanding the great cosmic force that makes the crustiest curmudgeons shuck their catch-all bah, humbug's and sigh in fond remembrance of days past. I was in the midst of writing the piece that closes this book, 'Sleeplessness in Seattle,' when I found myself caught up in something more than casual reminiscence. I was trying desperately to save a part of my childhood that, unlike many of the things covered in this book, was slipping through the cracks of popular history. With an unprecedented urgency, I was soon consumed by the need to archive every scrap of data and trivia about this childhood obsession that I could unearth. My previous efforts to preserve all things vintage horror paled in comparison to the machinations that drove my most recent obsession. I had discovered my grail, my ark of the covenant… even if friends and family alike thought it high time I purchase a one-way ticket to the bughouse, I felt justified.

As adults, we rarely experience the awe we took for granted as children. As we grow older, we gradually become more desperate to relive such moments, and we find that only through the very things that sparked our collective imaginations as children can we even come close to this now-elusive wonderment. For me, and probably many of the people reading this, it was monsters and everything devoted to them: films, comics, toys, movie magazines, what have you. That, of course, is a goodly part of what *Trashfiend* entails. But this beast has a particularly dark underbelly: stained and matted nether regions sullied by its need to wallow in the blood and the muck. As some of us grew up, the unattainable 'mature' horrors that our impressionable minds were mostly spared became our newfound sirens, our need to seek out their forbidden pleasures fueled by the very fact they were once taboo. Anything that hid behind an R rating, or was placed on the top shelf of the magazine rack beyond our adolescent reach, *had* to be something special. As horror fans, we were always looking for something new to shock our jaded sensibilities, so it was our very nature to grasp at things concerned adults did not want us to see.

After seeing these examples of Rick Baker's effects work for The Incredible Melting Man (1977), this film capped my Top Ten Most Wanted list for years. Starlog #11 (January 1978) Starlog Communications

Most of the things considered taboo in our society are labeled as such because they appeal to our basest nature, and they are often summed up with the lowest common denominators of sex and violence. Despite the fact these distasteful subjects are the cornerstones of American entertainment, they bear a stigma that forces respectable producers and publishers to peddle their wares in a more socially acceptable fashion lest they be compared to tapeworms or other unsavory parasites that inhabit one's lower intestinal tract.

Due to its inextricable ties with these taboos, the horror genre has always shared this stigma, but never more so than during the sixties and seventies when—excuse the mixed metaphor—it pushed the envelope and exploited the inability of weary censors to assert any real control over the breached floodgates. And since the entrepreneurs who capitalized on the growing market for titillation and bloodshed produced their lurid product as cheaply as humanly possible, much of it was and is viewed as 'trash' by the

general consensus. Although I would be hard pressed to consider Warren Publications or the writings of Robert Bloch and Leslie Whitten as garbage, the fact that they are horror automatically relegates them to the position of disposable entertainment in the eyes of many people. At best, horror is kid's stuff; at worst, the products of the genre are censured for fueling a savage and debauched society and regarded with utter disdain. Either way, like it or not, it's trash.

Of course, some of the films covered in *Trashfiend* are moldering turds that should never have been disinterred, except as a target of adoring ridicule from confused individuals like myself. But the films that offer the viewer more than just an opportunity to prove their prowess as the next Joel Robinson or Mike Nelson offer something special, something unique to their respective cultures and the discombobulated decades in which they were spawned. Much of this fare displays verve, characterized by a low budget ingenuity or an unrestrained viscera that is painfully absent from anything produced in the last twenty plus years. It has heart and soul, even if it is riddled with atheromata and moral degradation.

The best of it, of course, makes some of us feel like a kid again.

Trashfiend

Disposable horror fare of the 1960s & 1970s

Key to film review abbreviations & symbols

DIR Director/s
PRO Producer/s
SCR Screenwriter/s
NOV Film novelization availability
PB Mass market paperback, **SC** Softcover trade or **HC** Hardcover trade edition
DOP Director/s of photography
EXP Executive producer/s
MFX Makeup effects artist/s
SFX Special effects artist/s
VFX Visual effects artist/s
MUS Music composer/s
SND Soundtrack availability
CD Compact Disc or **LP** Vinyl release
STR Cast members

aka Pseudonym of cast or crew member
AKA Alternative title of production
m Running time rounded to nearest minute
RTU Running time unknown
DVD DVD availability
PAL PAL VHS availability
SE SECAM VHS availability
VHS NTSC VHS availability
WS Widescreen presentation or **FS** Full screen presentation
ADL Promotional adline

DVD region & video encoding formats

R0 Region Free Encoding
R1 Specific to the United States, Canada
R2 Specific to Western Europe, the Middle East, Japan, South Africa, Greenland
R3 Specific to Taiwan, Korea, the Philippines, Indonesia, Hong Kong
R4 Specific to Mexico, South and Central America, Australia, New Zealand, the Pacific Islands, the Caribbean
R5 Specific to CIS, Eastern Europe, India, most of Africa, North Korea, Mongolia
R6 Specific to China

NTSC Specific to the United States, Canada, Japan, South America, the Philippines; **PAL** Specific to Europe, Hong Kong, Australia and most African, Asian countries; **SECAM** Specific to France, the USSR, some African countries

THE ASPHYX (1972)

Glendale [UK] Paragon Films, Inc. [US] DIR: Peter Newbrook PRO: John Brittany SCR: Brian Comport DOP: Frederick

Archibald Young (aka Freddie Young) SFX: Ted Samuels MUS: Bill McGuffie STR: Ralph Arliss, Paul Bacon, Tony Caunter, David Grey, Jane Lapotaire, John Lawrence, Robert Powell, Alex Scott, Terry Scully, Robert Stephens and Fiona Walker

AKA: *L'Esprit de la Mort* [The Spirit of the Dead]

Experimente [Experiments]

The Horror of Death

Spirit of the Dead

Approximately 98m; Color; Rated PG

DVD: The *Aspbyx* [All Day Entertainment; 99(98) m; WS; NTSC R1] [Anchor Bay UK; 82m; WS; PAL R2] [Elite Entertainment; 98m; WS; NTSC R1]

VHS: The *Aspbyx* [Interglobal Video; 90m; FS; NTSC] [InterVision; 76m; FS; PAL] [Magnum Entertainment; 98m; FS; NTSC] [Something Weird Video; 90m; FS; NTSC] [United Home Video; 98m; FS; NTSC]

ADL: "When It Leaves, You're Dead"

CIRCA 1875. Sir Hugo (Robert Stephens), a widower obsessed with photographing the soul departing at the moment of death, hopes to prove the existence of the human spirit and take it from the realm of the priest to that of the scientist. It isn't until the death of his own son in a boating accident that he discovers the existence of an unearthly creature he dubs the 'asphyx', and that by trapping it he can impede its victim's mortality. Things take a turn for the dangerous when he attempts—with the aid of his adopted son Giles (Robert Powell)—to immortalize his loved ones, even at the risk of their own lives.

This film is loosely based on the efforts of one Hippolyte Baraduc (1850–1909), a Parisian gynecologist-cum-neurologist obsessed with photographing a dying person's spirit as it left the body. His most famous photograph is one taken of his wife twenty minutes after her departure on

October 15, 1907; hovering above her still warm corpse are three fuzzy white splotches that even today some believe is the manifestation of ectoplasm. Whether this was a carefully conceived hoax, or a simple glare marring what is otherwise an undistinguished photo, it remains that the *idea* of capturing the image of one's soul is far more interesting than the results. It also shouldn't come as any surprise that *The Asphyx* is far more interesting than Baraduc's dodgy postmortem snapshot.

Videobox art for The Asphyx (1986) Magnum Entertainment #M-3117

Despite a few breaches in logic, this is an adeptly made and thought provoking supernatural thriller. This period piece is further elevated above the low budget trappings by some excellent performances and lavish backdrops. The banshee-like asphyx is one of cinema's more chilling apparitions; unfortunately, its (ahem) over exposure reveals some jerky stop motion photography and conspicuously looped footage that ultimately renders it toothless. Had the over ambitious effects artists on this film applied the cinematic principle of less is more, the manifestation of the

asphyx itself would have truly been noteworthy as one of the creepiest bogies of horror film history.

They make What! What! in the moonlight? US one-sheet art for The Beach Girls and the Monster (1966) American Academy Pictures

Alas, this was the only feature film directed by Newbrook (1920–). His other credits include that of producer and/or cinematographer on such genre efforts as *Corruption* (1967), *School for Unclaimed Girls* (1969) and *Crucible of Terror* (1971). He also worked on *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (1957) and *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962), as camera operator and second unit photographer, respectively. (We won't hold against him his association with these earlier efforts, though, as he was probably hard up for cash at the time.) Cinematographer Young (1902–98) boasts a similarly mediocre résumé, having received no less than three Oscars in a career that spanned almost sixty years, and inventing pre-fogging, the process of pre-exposing film stock in order to mute the colors, which was first applied in 1966. But

you and I will always remember him first and foremost for photographing *The Asphyx* and *Gorgo* (1961).

Despite numerous releases on both videotape and DVD, this film still remains difficult to track down because it never remains in print for any length of time. Although the digitally re-mastered DVD releases are undoubtedly better than previously issued prints, it is rumored that the only surviving positive prints of the film were seriously marred, and even some patchwork editing between several prints would not yield a perfect copy of the film.

Those viewers expecting out and out trash may be sorely disappointed, but those looking for an above average albeit low-key shocker should be pleasantly surprised.

The Beach Girls and the Monster (1966)

American Academy Pictures [US] DIR: Jon Hall PRO: Edward Janis SCR: Joan Janis (aka Joan Gardner) SFX: Robert Hansard (aka Bob Hansard) MUS: Elaine DuPont, Walker Edmiston, Arnold Lessing and Frank Sinatra Jr. STR: Clyde Adler, Sue Casey, Dale Davis, Elaine DuPont, Walker Edmiston, John Hall, Arnold Lessing, Reed Morgan (aka Read Morgan), Gloria Neil, Tony Roberts, Carolyn Williamson and Kingsley the Lion

AKA: *Invisible Terror*

Monster from the Surf

Monster of the Surf

Surf Terror

Approximately 74m; b&w and Color; Unrated

DVD: *The Beach Girls and the Monster* [Image Entertainment; 66(74)m; WS; NTSC R1]

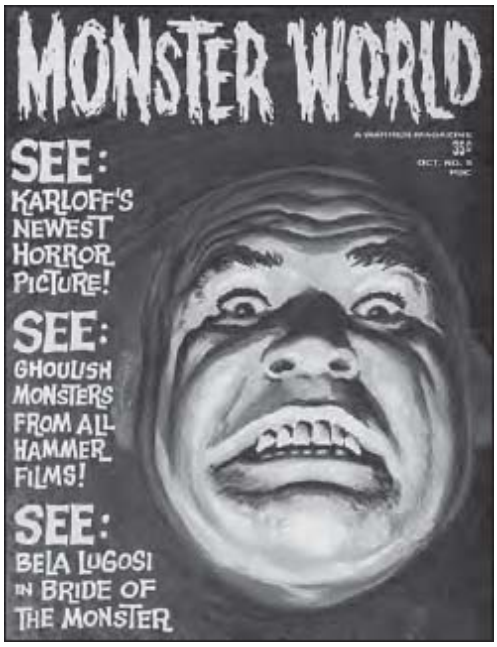
VHS: *The Beach Girls and the Monster* [Englewood Entertainment; 74m; FS; NTSC]

ADL: “Beach Party Lovers Make Hey! Hey! in the Moonlight… While the Monster Lurks in the Shadows!”

BUNNY, A TEENAGE GIRL playing hard to get with her rutting beau on the beach at night, is murdered by a waterlogged beastie after wandering out of sight of her friends. Distraught, a fellow beach bum, Richard Lindsay (Walker Edmiston), mounts his own investigation when the police prove next to useless as well as prejudiced. (Those surfers “are capable of anything… even murder!”) Unfortunately, Rick is unable to make much headway on his own, as he either spends his time staving off his horny stepmother’s advances, or arguing with his father (John Hall), who insists he quit frittering his life away and assist him with his scientific research. The viewer’s suspicions are clumsily steered towards Mark (Arnold Lessing), an affable but creepy artist living with the Lindsays having been injured in a car accident. (Although he claims to have no feeling whatsoever in his leg, he walks with only a slight limp.) Filmmakers have led us to believe that all teenagers did in the early sixties was either surf, hot rod, or spend their off hours go-go dancing on the beach. (So what did the kids in the midwest do? Oh, yeah… move to Californ-I-A.) I wasn’t there, and since most of what we have in the way of documentation is a slew of beach pictures, we will simply have to toss skepticism to the wayside and assume this was indeed the case. We’ll also have to assume that these 24-7 parties were only interrupted by men in rubber monster suits and the occasional grounding for bad behavior.

Parental restriction aside, the interludes in *The Beach Girls and the Monster* are provided by some truly painful musical numbers (accompanied by stabs at humor that are about as jocular as being poked in the shin with a rusty penknife) and a particularly destitute looking monster. (No amount of seaweed affixed to its rubbery hide will obscure its dime store origins, although—for reasons best left unsaid lest I spoil your viewing experience—it makes sense within the context of the film.) The intentional humor is best illustrated by a scene of a teen ogling a gaggle of bikini clad birds while wearing a pair of slink-eyed glasses, his leering accompanied by a zany sproing sound effect and gunfire. Hopefully, the gunshot was the sound of the guilt stricken sound engineer shooting himself having contributed to the whacky goings-on. (Being without our supposititious engineer in mid production may explain some of the glaring oversights in the way of sound editing, particularly in the scene where the engine of a teen’s roadster is

completely drowned out by the soft, soothing post synch sounds of the ocean in the distance and some local avian wildlife twittering nearby.) There is a noticeable lack of scoring through much of the film, which is disappointing since this will probably hold the most appeal to viewers with its Ventures-like rhythms and occasional spats of jazzy sixties stylings. (While sister Nancy Sinatra was off being fitted for a new pair of boots, Frank Jr [1944–] was spending his days recording surf tunes, some of which appear in this film.) When these dated instrumentals do surface, it is often incongruously placed, as in the discovery of the film's first corpse.



Portrait of the late Tor Johnson by Gray Morrow, presumably based on the actor's reactions at the 1961 premiere of The Beast of Yucca Flats. Monster World #5 (October 1965) Warren Publishing

As far as the actors are concerned, most of the performances are even more wooden than the surfboards cluttering the beaches for miles, which may explain the filmmakers' decision to rely on the far more lively pipelines and hang tens to pad out the shy running time. (Although much of the surf footage shown here was originally in color, some of the later prints in circulation have had it desaturated so that it doesn't detract from the remainder of the monochromatic film stock.) It appears much of the film's

budget was exhausted when obtaining film and music rights, and precious little left for the special effects department. In addition to the miserable looking beastie that gets far too little screen time, all of the victims—mauled to death by the shambling, bug eyed fish man—suffer from nothing more than grazes that barely qualify as skin deep. Determined not to outdo itself, *The Beach Girls and the Monster* is not only festooned with continuity problems, but also culminates with an overlong car chase that—with its projected backdrop spinning wildly out of control whilst the passengers barely waver—gives new meaning to the word slapdash.

Yes, this movie smacks of a quickie trying to cash in on a trend that plagued many a coastal community, if only because it is difficult to imagine that *The Beach Girls and the Monster* was a labor of love for anyone involved. (I was, uhm, lucky enough to see this flick back to back with Roger Corman's *Attack of the Crab Monsters* [1957]. If you didn't much care for AIP's effort, but wish you had, do what I did and you'll gain a whole new appreciation for Roger Corman's crusty crustaceans.) This was the last film to feature ex-matinee idol Jon Hall (1915–79) in front of the camera. It was also his first and only credited role as director; he and Arthur C Pierce would pick up the slack for Michael A Hoey while on the set of *The Navy vs the Night Monsters* the following year, for which Hall also supplied 'special' photographic effects.' *The Beach Girls and the Monster* also marks the one and only appearance of Kingsley the Lion. Of this, we can all be very grateful.

The titular monster in the surf gets his own rockin' theme song. Whether or not this reverb saturated ditty graces the B-side of an obscure 7 inch single somewhere, I haven't the foggiest, but that won't deter me from looking.

As bad as *The Beach Girls and the Monster* is, remind yourself that out there, waiting patiently for unwary viewers like ourselves, is a monster movie so inexcusably bad that it makes this film shine in comparison. Case in point…

The Beast of Yucca Flats (1961)

> Anthony Cardoza Enterprises [US] Cinema Associates [US] DIR: Coleman Francis PRO: Anthony Cardoza and Coleman Francis SCR: Coleman Francis DOP: John Cagle EXP: Roland Morin and

Jim Oliphant MUS: Gene Kauer, Irwin Nafshunand and Al Remington STR: Larry Aten, Linda Bielema, Conrad Brooks, Alan Francis, Barbara Francis, Coleman Francis, Ronald Francis, Tor Johansson (aka Tor Johnson), Marcia Knight, Bob Labansat, Douglas Mellor, Jim Miles, John Morrison, Jim Oliphant, George Prince, Bing Stafford, Graham Stafford and Eric Tomlin

AKA: *The Atomic Monster*

Girl Madness

Approximately 54m; b&w; Unrated

DVD: *The Beast of Yucca Flats* [Alpha Video; 54m; FS; NTSC R1] [Image Entertainment; 54m; FS; NTSC R1]

VHS: *The Beast oj Yucca Flats* [Anthony Cardoza Enterprises; 75(53)m; FS; NTSC] [Englewood Entertainment; 54m; FS; NTSC]

ADL: "Commies Made Him an Atomic Mutant!"

IT WOULD BE SILLY for me to deny my pathological devotion to horror fare made during the sixties and seventies. Even the most somnambulistic efforts made in this twenty year stretch fill me with an inexplicable sick pleasure. The cheaper the effects, the more painful the dialogue, the more hackneyed the execution, the *better.* I have not only plowed through the entirety of Andy Milligan's oeuvre, I have also gone back for seconds. My name is Scott Aaron Stine, and I have a problem.

Eventually, though, even the worst drug addict, the most irredeemable junkie, will hit rock bottom. Everyone has their breaking point, an epiphany where the realization hits them: "Jeezus, this is just *bad!"*

For Devon Bertsch, who helped out with the initial stages of this book, it was Ray Dennis Steckler's *The Hollywood Strangler Meets the Skid-Row Slasher* (1978). Knowing that I had already once brought the man to his knees, there was no way I could subject him *to The Beast of Yucca Flats;* any sadistic pleasure I may have gleaned from this act of psychological

terrorism would surely have been overshadowed by the guilt I would feel for him having to eat his meals through a straw for the remainder of his days.

Over the course of a year, *The Beast of Yucca Flats* made it into my videocassette player no less than seven times. Having watched and re-watched my library of several thousand videos, I would inevitably drag out this one with the intent of finishing it once I had tired of ransacking my video collection. I rarely made it through more than five, maybe ten, minutes before I came up with a more pressing engagement. The video would sit on my entertainment center for days thereafter, but would eventually make its way back downstairs when I got tired of looking at the nondescript box. There it would sit until another moment of quiet desperation coaxed it back into my player a few months down the road. This ritual, I might add, was far more interesting than anything the film itself had to offer. (As if some mad poet were calling the shots, it took the filmmakers just as long to shoot *The Beast of Yucca Flats* as it did for me to consume the film in its entirety.) A bedraggled Tor Johnson (1903–71) stumbles across the empty desert, a scarred and deranged victim of an atomic accident. He abducts a young woman, stumbling even more with her in tow. A couple of guys stumble across her, and drag her to safety. A family of four stops at a gas station; the two young boys wander into the desert, and their parents stumble after them. The boys, hopelessly lost, stumble across Tor in a cave, but make their escape. Tor stumbles after them. Everyone does a lot of stumbling in this film and— suffice to say—it's not relegated to the people in front of the camera.

It's not easy sympathizing with a cast of players who are upstaged by scrub grass. Even a film like *Frozen Scream* (1975) is a much more emotionally charged outing than Cardoza's seventy five minute excursion into tedium. The Ed Wood Jr-like narration—riddled with so many browbeaten clichés and pointless observations that there is little enjoyment to be derived from its deadpan guidance—is no exception. ("It was a 112 degrees in the shade. And there was no shade," our host exclaims with profound disinterest.) Technically, the film—which was shot in 35mm and not 16mm as one might guess—is as flat as the wasteland on which most of it was staged. (One has to wonder how much of the $34,000 budget was actually laundered, as it looks as if the film was made for far less money than reported.) Granted, it may not be nearly as shoddy or incompetent as many other Z-grade features, but at least some of its peers exhibit something

that could be mistaken for *style. The Beast of Yucca Flats* simply forgoes such luxuries. Furthermore, one wonders if sexploitation filmmaker Doris Wishman took her cue on post synch dubbing from this film: the actors rarely speak, and when they do, their faces are conveniently off screen so there are no worries about matching the droning voices to their chapped lips during editing. (It wouldn't have mattered if they were out of synch, as the viewer's attention is instead focused on the patches of dead flora surrounding the players.) People have the gall to say that Ed Wood was the worst filmmaker ever? At least his efforts were enjoyable, or at the very least passably engaging; Wood's young ingénues—director Coleman Francis and producer Anthony Cardoza—could scarcely make these claims in the years to come.

Sadly, this inauspicious production—which was shot under the working title of *The Violent Sun*—was Tor Johnson's cinematic swansong. To add insult to injury, the aging strongman with a heart of gold was paid a paltry $300 for starring in this career-killing feature. Producer Cardoza (1930–) also helped finance such no budget creature features as Wood's *Night of the Ghouls* (1959) and *Bigfoot* (1970). Late director Coleman (1919–73) spent most of his nine year film career writing, producing, directing, and even starring in exploitation films (some of the latter being directed by Ray Dennis Steckler and big boob connoisseur Russ Meyer). Although official sources generally cite hardened arteries as the cause of the filmmaker's death, it is rumored that his body was found in the back of an abandoned station wagon, a plastic bag pulled over his head and a tube shoved down his throat and/or wrapped around his neck. Creepy, regardless of how he managed to wind up in such an unfavorable position.

If ever there were a film that perfectly illustrated the cinematic definition of mind numbing, *The Beast of Yucca Flats* would surely be it. And for once, *please* don't presume my beratings to be a recommendation. C'mon… any film that casts a 390lb Swedish wrestler as a Russian physicist has got to have issues.

BEWARE! THE BLOB (1972)

> Jack H Harris Enterprises, Inc. [US] DIR: Lawrence Martin Hagman (aka Larry Hagman) PRO: Anthony Harris SCR: Anthony Harris and Jack Woods DOP: Al Hamm EXP: Jack H Harris SFX:

Tim Baar MUS: Mort Garson STR Margie Adleman, Tim Baar, Shelley Berman, Godfrey Cambridge, Marlene Clark, Del Close, William B Foster, Gwynne Gilford, Robert N Goodman, Danny Goldman, Gerrit Graham, Lawrence Martin Hagman (aka Larry Hagman), Preston Hagman, John Houser, JJ Johnston, Carol Lynley, Tiger Joe Marsh, Burgess Meredith, Larry Norman, Fred Smoot, Richard Stahl, Randy Stonehill, Rockne Tarkington, Dick van Patten, Robert Walker, Richard Webb and Cindy Williams

AKA: *Beware of the Blob*

Cuidado! Con el… Blob! [Beware! It's the… Blob!]

Son of (the) Blob

Approximately 87m; Color; Rated PG

DVD: *Beware! The Blob* [Image Entertainment; 87m; FS; NTSC R1

VHS: *Beware! The Blob* [Image Entertainment; 87m; FS; NTSC] *Son of the Blob* [Video Gems; 87m; FS; NTSC]

ADL: "It's Loose Again Eating Everyone!"

Dear Mr Hagman,

What the heck were you thinking? Did producer Harris have in his possession some compromising photos of Bill Daily, Barbara Eden and yourself, thus forcing your hand into helming this project? I would have surmised that the blank fired at you on the set of Dallas had lodged in your noggin and caused irreparable brain damage, but that incident didn't take place until eight years after you decided to sully the silver screen with Beware! The Blob.

For many years, I was convinced the giant space booger that terrorized Steve McQueen in 1958 had indeed returned for an encore. Cherishing the gooseflesh I felt when I first caught The Blob on TV at the impressionable age of five, I spent years trying to track down a copy of your nearly lost opus. Unfortunately, I was seriously distressed, nay, traumatized when I

finally chanced upon your film many, many years later. Anyone who insists that Beware! The Blob is a direct sequel to the fifties scifi classic is no more trustworthy than the nitwit who tries to persuade others that Return of the Living Dead (1985) is a sequel to George A Romero's Night of the Living Dead (1968). Both 'sequels' are nothing more than tongue in cheek send-ups. Similarly, both tarnish the reputations of their predecessors.

Sorry, Larry, crosses are used to keep vampires at bay, not disgruntled theatergoers. Re-release pressbook advertisement for Beware! The Blob (1972) Jack H. Harris Enterprises

To say that your directorial debut is a bad film would only beg interest from someone such as myself, when in reality it smacks of forged trash. Any self respecting trashfiend would keep their distance from a film that attempts to mimic the manic ineptitude of bona fide gutter cinema. All of this may simply be the result of your being an inept filmmaker, but one gets the feeling that you and/or Harris were simply ridiculing the genre by forgoing craftsmanship. Granted, a few of the scenes may elicit an honest chuckle, but it is no recompense for what is otherwise an embarrassment for everyone

involved. The script, as it were, would leave even poor old Ed Wood scratching his head until his scalp bled, with the rampant improbabilities undermined only by the complete and utter lack of continuity.

Mexican lobby card for Beware! The Blob (1972) Jack H. Harris Enterprises, Inc.

It is said that there is nothing sadder than a sad clown. How about competent has-beens or aspiring actors reduced to eke out a living reciting drivel unfit for even a Troma film? Somehow, in light of this debacle, Dick van Patten and Cindy Williams managed to work their way ‘up’ to Eight is Enough and Laverne & Shirley, respectively, but did any of the other actors ever forgive you and your cohorts? Do you still get death threats, I wonder, for many a burgeoning career you may have cut short? At least poor Mr Meredith (1907–97)—wrapped in a serape and five years away from saving face with Michael Winner’s The Sentinel (1977)–was spared seeing his name in the final credits.

I feel particularly sorry for Del Close, though, who tried to redeem his contribution in a fit of madness by co-starring in the remake of The Blob

sixteen years later ... yet another earthbound disaster that should have been consumed by flames before it reached the surface. I can't help but feel a sense of relief that he passed away just before the ultimate degradation, when Beware! The Blob was rescued from obscurity by the DVD revolution.

At best, 'the film that JR shot' amounts to little more than a string of skits stripped of their punch lines. When the only suspense to be found is dependent upon whether or not some poor sap is going to plop down on a weathered recliner in which the Blob has already made itself cozy, the viewer is reminded just how short life really is.

I have to ask, in which shopping mall did you find the composer for your score? It must have been tough dragging him away from his Hammond organ, with the bustling crowds held in rapt attention and all.

However, I must congratulate your crew for a few palatable space booger effects. That is, those not conceived through forced perspective shots. Or through the reversal of the film stock. Or utilizing inflatable stand-ins. The rest isn't half bad.

I just don't get it. Are we to assume that your cameo in Beware! The Blob as a begrimed transient was indicative of your state of affairs at the time, and that taking this job was a desperate attempt to pull yourself out of the gutter? If this was the case, we could forgive such transgressions as long as you promised never to step behind a fully loaded camera again.

Please don't take this tirade as a personal attack. From all reports, you sound like a really great guy, having contributed much time and resources to some very worthy causes. But couldn't you have rested on your laurels? It's safe to say that many a boy discovered his sexuality long before puberty, thanks to *I Dream of Jeannie*, and thus you—Major Nelson—were cool by association and the envy of all. For this you would not be forgotten, but then you had to go muck it all up by making fun of both the sci fi genre and its aficionados by having a hand in this lousy sequel.

Jeezus, Larry ... what *were* you thinking?

Sincerely, Scott Stine

P.S. Could you sign and return the enclosed photo of you as Cedric Acton from the Dec. 16, 1970, episode of *Night Gallery?* Thanks.

BLOOD AND LACE (1971)

The Carlin Company [US] DIR: Philip S Gilbert

PRO: Ed Carlin and Gil Lasky SCR:Gil Lasky

DOP: Paul Hipp MUS: John Rons STR: Peter Armstrong, Dennis Christopher, Maggie Corey, Gloria Grahame, Len Lesser, Terry Messina, Melody Patterson, Milton Selzer, Louise Sherrill, Mary Strawberry, Ronald Taft and Vic Tayback

AKA: *El Martillo Macabro* [The Macabre Hammer]

El Sotano del Terror [The Cellar of Terror]

Visión Sangrienta [Bloody Vision]

Approximately 86m; Color; Rated GP

ADL: “Shock After Shock After Shock… As Desire Drives a Bargain with Death!”

US lobby card for Blood and Lace (1971) American International Pictures, Inc.

A WOMAN and her lover are murdered in their sleep by someone wielding a claw hammer; not much attention is given to the case, as the fairer of the two has a disreputation for being user-friendly,' and most of the clues are destroyed in a fire set to cover the killer's tracks. Being the only witness to the crime, the woman's daughter, Ellie Masters (Melody Patterson), is befriended by a detective assigned to the puzzling murder case, a sleazy ex-theatre owner named Calvin (Vic Tayback) who has taken time out from his busy schedule of "sniffing around for good breeding stock" to look for the culprit. Left without a mother and clueless as to the identity of her father, the teenage girl is shipped off to Deere Youth Home, an orphanage the abandoned youth of a Dickens novel would consider a summer camp.

The matron of this fine, fine establishment, the widow Mrs Dottie Deere (Gloria Grahame), is a little wiggy to say the least. In addition to sleazing her way into the heart of the doctor (Milton Selzer) whose job it is to make sure everything stays up to code, she spends her off hours filling the basement freezer with the bodies of attempted runaways and ranting about bringing people back from the dead. (Suffice to say, her very dead hubby Jameson has been spared a proper burial as well.) She is assisted by her handyman Tom (Len Lesser), a work of art who makes the slimy detective look like a saint. Soon, Ellie starts having nightmares involving her mother's torched lover, back from the dead and ready to make short work of the surviving Masters with his own Stanley whack-o-matic.

In my early teens, a ratty one-sheet poster for this film adorned my bedroom wall, my reverence assured even having never seen it. (During my youth, *Blood and Lace* showed up on *Nightmare Theatre*—undoubtedly cut—but I was apparently indisposed the night it aired. It's safe to assume that even truncated this film would have left a lasting impression on my delicate psyche.) When I finally acquired a third generation copy of *Blood and Lace* just a few years back, I was not disappointed… except for one thing, something that still vexes me to this very day. Namely, this: where in Sam Hill is the claw hammer killer sporting sunglasses and a lavender robe? This androgynous psychopath graces every piece of ad art ever used for the film, both domestic and abroad, yet proves to be *in absentia* once the film rolls.

I've grown very accustomed to the unfulfilled hyperbole that dominates advertising for trash horror from the sixties and seventies—hell, I live for it, knowing full well that the films can rarely live up to such great expectations—but discovering that this purple hooded hammer wielding sociopath was nothing more than the fever dream of a bored advertising executive has left me feeling unfulfilled.

In addition to The Perplexing Case of the Misplaced Mascot, *Blood and Lace* offers numerous mysteries… the most prominent being that it was released upon an unsuspecting public with a GP [General Public] rating. Although it is probably a stretch, one can't help but wonder if this production was singlehandedly responsible for the MPAA [Motion Picture Association of America] replacing the ambiguous GP with a far more pointed PG [Parental Guidance] the following year. That aside, even the more liberal filmgoers like myself recognize *Blood and Lace* as a clearcut case for an R rating. (Heck, it's a clearcut case illustrating just why we established a ratings board in the first place.) Granted, much of the sex and violence is only implied, but had they shown exactly what was going on off-screen, most theatregoers would have found the film unbearable. Surprisingly, there is no nudity, and the bloodshed is negligible (a runaway's hand being hacked off with a meat cleaver being the only bit of graphic bloodletting); it is instead the implied necrophilia, the potentially incestuous situations, the attempted teen rape and molestation, the Nazi-esque torture tactics and what have you, that makes it a tasteless excursion. Heck, the lurid tone that permeates the script is enough to get the film slapped with a far more restrictive rating if it ever gets a legit video release. *Henry—Portrait of a Serial Killer* couldn't secure an R in 1987 because of its bleak atmosphere, and it's not nearly as scummy as this modest flick, made sixteen years previous.

Like McNaughton's piece de resistance, *Blood and Lace* also brims with unsavory characters in the midst of perpetrating unsavory acts, but here it is cheap and tawdry instead of artistic and thought provoking. (Although there is a somewhat somber moment when—having been confronted with the bloody fates of their peers and given the opportunity of escape—the troubled teens stand numbly instead of beating their feet, the oldest among them asking, "But where do we go?") And lest we forget the finale, which only emphasizes the sensational-minded script: neither of the revelations saved for the last act are particularly unexpected, but they make for a double

whammy of a downbeat climax to what has already proven a downright downbeat film.

Technically, the film is just as gritty; it wouldn't surprise me in the least to discover that *Blood and Lace* was shot over a weekend using borrowed equipment. The overbearing soundtrack—pilfered classical music broken on occasion by a troubled theremin—is often used to great effect in distracting the viewer from the rugged production values. One of the areas in which the production would have benefited from a couple of extra bucks is the makeup department. Enter the vengeful apparition of the nameless John killed alongside Ellie's mother. Many films have used scarred killers to good effect, but our heroine's assailant looks like an old man who fell asleep at the breakfast table and took a face plant into his bowl of oatmeal.

Mexican lobby card for Blood and Lace (1971) Rozil Distribuidor

Blood and Lace and the people involved demonstrate ingenuity on at least one occasion, though. I am, of course, speaking of the film's patented claw hammer cam. Too lazy to have the cameraman hold a murder weapon

in front of the lens as he plays the part of a psychopath sneaking up on the intended victims? No problem. Simply attach the tool to an immobile extension from the camera rig, and voila! Claw hammer cam. Sure, it robs entire scenes of anything even remotely resembling tension, but the viewer is simply too awed by the awkward gimcrackery to care.

Not enough tease? We have a teenage catfight involving sleepwear, after one of them successfully seduces the other's boyfriend. Not enough splatter? In one of the film's most effectively shocking moments, we are offered a loving close up of a defrosting corpse's seeping stab wound. These days, most gore effects have little effect on yours truly—having pretty much seen it all in the last twenty years—but this was just plain icky. God bless the seventies.

Femme fatale Grahame (1922–81)—thoroughly convincing with her Usa meets Norman Bates shtick—has a long career of films and television appearances to her credit, spanning thirty seven years from 1944 to 1981, including some very notable film noir efforts. (Her last film, made the year she succumbed to cancer, was Armand Weston's not so great supernatural thriller *The Nesting;* she was also in Michael Pataki's *Mansion of the Doomed* four years prior to that. Some may consider these a far cry from her first bout of public recognition with Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life* [1946], but not I.) Associate producer Chase Mishkin may or may not be the same Chase Mishkin who is a Tony Award winning Broadway producer, one of her most notable accomplishments being *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*, which was adapted for the screen in 2001. The Chase Mishkin in question may or may not also be related to exploitation film producer William Mishkin (1908–97) and/or his son Lew (1941–2001), who were responsible for imposing upon unsuspecting theatregoers the films of Andy Milligan—*Torture Dungeon* and *Bloodthirsty Butchers* (both 1970) among them. If the former is true, she's not telling, as her various online biographies are suspiciously scant when it comes to work prior to the eighties. If the latter is true, it's just one more skeleton to stack like cordwood.

Although not nearly as taboo bashing, fans may also want to check out the Carlin (1932–96) and Lasky co-production *The Night God Screamed* (1971), directed by Lee Madden, who later gave us the low key shocker *Night Creature* (1978) starring Donald Pleasence as a disturbed big game hunter. Sadly, this was the only film to director Gilbert's credit.

DOCTOR BLOOD'S COFFIN (1960)

Caralan Productions Ltd [UK] DIR: Sidney J Furie PRO: George Fowler SCR: Nathan Juran (aka Jerry Juran), James Kelley and Peter Miller DOP: Stephen Dade and Nicolas Roeg EXP: David E Rose SFX: Leslie Bowie and Peter Neilson MUS: Buxton Orr STR: Andy Alston, Hazel Court, Paul Hardtmuth, Ian Hunter, Fred Johnson, Gerald C Lawson, Kieron Moore, John Romane, Paul Stockman and Kenneth J Warren

AKA: *El Abrazo del Muerto* [The Embrace of the Dead]

La Bara del Dottor Sangue [The Coffin of Doctor Blood]

Approximately 92m; Color; Unrated

DVD: *Dr Blood's Coffin* [Alpha Video; 92m; FS; NTSC R1] [Front Row Entertainment; 92m; FS; NTSC R1]

VHS: *Dr Blood's Coffin* [Alpha Video; 92m; FS; NTSC] [Scream Gems; 92m; FS; NTSC]

ADL: "We Dare You to Look into… Doctor Blood's Coffin"

PETER BLOOD (Kieron Moore), an overly ambitious biochemist hung up on postmortem heart transplants, is booted out of the Vienna hospital in which he holds residence because— darn it all—he prefers still-breathing guinea pigs of the two-legged variety to the cadavers and animal test subjects usually supplied for lab experiments. Undeterred by the setback, he quietly returns to his hometown where his father (Ian Hunter) runs a small practice, and sets up shop in the caverns of an old tin mine that riddles the countryside. His laboratory established and his work underway, he finally shows his face under the pretense of a vacation, the locals completely unaware that he is the one responsible for a series of mysterious disappearances plaguing the community in the weeks prior to his arrival. A man of many pursuits, it doesn't take long for the younger Blood to fall for

his father's nurse Linda (Hazel Court), so when he's not burning the midnight oil with his unwilling test subjects, he's wooing Daddy's assistant.

Well, in spite of the adline's warning, I dared to look, and what I found wasn't nearly as shocking as a pot of moldy stew I once discovered my roommate had shoved to the back of the refrigerator. That's not saying that this low key mad scientist flick doesn't have its recompense. With its gothic allure and nice use of colors, *Doctor Blood's Coffin* is occasionally reminiscent of early Hammer fare, but is unfortunately shorn of much of the style and flair that usually dominates that prestigious studio's horror offerings. Furthermore, the film lacks the presence of a Peter Cushing or a Christopher Lee, veteran actors who made even the lesser Hammer films a treat to watch. The film's only ace card in this regard is Hazel Court (1926–), whose talents would be put to better use in several of Roger Corman's Edgar Allan Poe adaptations in the next few years (usually as a femme fatale), namely *The Premature Burial* (1962), *The Raven* (1963) and *The Masque of the Red Death* (1964).

Mexican lobby card for Doctor Blood's Coffin (1960) United Artists de Mexico

The film tries to instill some mystery early on—in reference to the identity of the mad scientist—but it is obvious from the minute they reveal the character of Peter Blood that the two are one and the same. (Of course, this is all moot anyway, since the title of the film reveals our culprit even before the credits roll.) Why the filmmakers insist on the obfuscation is befuddling, as the mystery only bogs down the story. These attempts provide only unnecessary distractions; not surprising, things pick up once the filmmakers dispense with this tiring charade.

What Blood's experiments entail remain vague for much of the film—it instead focuses more on the surgeon's attempts to cover his tracks than on the research itself, which is fine—but when they turn out to be textbook Frankenstein antics, we realize that any mystery resulting from this lack of information was not intentional. (Although, how curare and heart transplants could result in a crusty faced zombie is anyone's clue, but more on him later.) The only real suspense garnered is when one of Blood's half paralyzed patients tries to drag himself to freedom while his captor is giving the authorities a misleading tour of the very same catacombs in which the man is imprisoned.

The end result of the doctor's work—the aforementioned revenant with a bad case of dry rot—is an effective bogeyman, and some of the surgery footage that precedes the token reanimation is quite grisly, especially when one considers that the patients are paralyzed and fully conscious during the vivisections. The settings also add to the film's dreary charm, from the isolated small town backdrop, to the network of mines below the city in which the laboratory is safely sequestered. If only the handling of the material was less pedestrian, these facets would not have been the saving grace of the production.

In light of its tepidness, it is ultimately regrettable that *Doctor Blood's Coffin* is just a tad too competent to be forthcoming with the type of unintentional humor that often results from stock monsters and a meager budget. One of the most amusing moments—if one could call it that—has the unwary caregiver disclosing her new beau's sideline. Her objections concerning the obvious moral decrepitude of his work, it seems, has nothing

to do with the Hippocratic oath; instead, he is castigated for being very un-Christian. Alas, that's as funny as it gets.

Star Moore (1924–) appeared in *The Day of the Triffids* in 1962, then pretty much avoided genre fare for his remaining years in showbusiness. Co-star Ian Hunter (1900–75) had a long history of playing medical types, including Dr

Lanyon in the 1941 version *of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde.* Supporting actor Kenneth Warren (1929–73) appeared in suck-horror outings as *I, Monster* (1971), *Demons of the Mind* (1972) and *The Creeping Flesh* (1973).

As for the crew, director Furie (1933–) co-directed *Devil Doll* four years later, then went on to produce many a mindless Hollywood pic after he had some success with a couple of well received films in the early seventies; in the last few years, he has spent his time directing films in his native Canada. Co-writer Kelley (aka Kelly) went on to direct a couple of admirable low key shockers, *The Beast in the Cellar* (1970) and *Diabòlica Malicia* [Diabolic Evil] (1972) aka *What the Peeper Saw,* before retiring from film. Camera operator Nicolas 'Nick' Roeg (1928–) went on to become an acclaimed director in Tinseltown.

For reasons unknown to myself, this film was banned in Finland upon its original theatrical release. Those Scandinavians just don't recognize real art when they see it.

Worth a look, but would interest indiscriminate fans of gothic fare much more than hardcore trashfiends.

The Double Garden (1970)

Toei Company, Ltd [Ja/US] DIR: Kenneth G Crane SCR: Edward D Wood Jr. STR: James Craig and James Yagi

AKA: *The Devil Garden*

The Revenge of Doctor X

La Venganza del Dr X [The Vengeance of Dr X]

Venus Flytrap

Approximately 94m; Color; Unrated

VHS: The *Revenge of Doctor X* [New Horizons Video; 90(94)m; FS; NTSC] [Regal Video; 90(94) m; FS; NTSC] Venus Flytrap [Retro Entertainment Sinema; 95(94)m; FS; NTSC]

ADL: “A Different Slice of Life!”

VHS box art for The Double Garden (1986) Regal Video, Inc. #R-1014

EXHIBITING THE earmarks of being overworked and underlaid (“Excuse me… my mind is not working. There’s so many things!”), Dr Bragan (James Craig) is coaxed into taking some much needed R&R by his Japanese assistant, whose homeland seems suited for an ideal getaway. (What does Japan have that Wilmington, North Carolina doesn’t?) On his way to the airport, Bragan’s car has some problems—the biggest being that he can’t tell the difference between the brakes and the gas pedal. While his vehicle is being repaired by a roadside mechanic whose face resembles a dime store

Halloween mask (remember the timeless, cigar chomping bum?), Bragan's horticulturist background kicks in and he digs up a Venus Flytrap in a nearby swamp with which to accompany him on his journey. Foreshadowing things to come, the plant gives him a love bite on the plane. "Good thing it's so small… a big one could take your arm *off,'* the stewardess exclaims. "It could at that," Bragan agrees.

The doctor is met at the airport by his assistant's pretty cousin. ("Frattery will get you everywhere," she jests in broken English.) Luckily, she knows "the perfect prace" for him to unwind and drags him off to an abandoned hotel owned by her rich father. Although she fails to mention that the resort sits next door to a very active volcano, and that the caretaker is a hunchback who spends his off hours on the organ playing nothing but Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D Minor, Dr Bragan wastes no time in setting up shop in the greenhouse. His luck continues, as his young hostess is also a botanist. Although she is familiar with a rare, deep sea cousin of the Venus Flytrap, *Venus Vesiculosa,* she has apparently never heard of its much more common dry land counterpart, which could be had for 99¢ mail order from the back of any comic book. (Oh, I forgot… girls don't read comics. Silly me.) Intent on proving his theory that humans evolved from plants, Dr Bragan grafts his swampland find to a rather large specimen of *Venus Vesiculosa* he and a bevy of nubile skinny dippers find just a stone's throw from shore, thus "creating a whole new species… a plant as human as the human element itself!" With a little help from an electrical storm and some unwary puppy chow that wanders within reach of the now humanoid plant monster, the film exits *The Little Shop of Horrors* and stumbles headfirst into *Frankenstein* territory, tripping over its own ungainly feet with every step.

To help answer some questions, I must first point out that this film was indeed scripted by the one and only Ed Wood Jr *of Plan 9 from Outer Space* fame. With this in mind, the lofty, often perplexing prose no longer seems unnatural. The complete disregard for science, nay, *common sense* becomes acceptable within this context. When one watches an Ed Wood film, one must accept the fact that the players speak an almost alien language, that everything adheres to a logic grounded only in the laws of chaos theory… lest they rip their own pubic hair out by its roots in sheer frustration at trying to comprehend the proceedings. Even when his participation is relegated to that of screenwriter, Ed's hand guides a production in such a way that comparisons to his own films are unavoidable.

Riddled with awkward non sequitur posing as dialogue, *The Double Garden* is a pleasant reminder why trash cinema can be just as gratifying as serious fare. Even the pidgin English fails to obscure Wood's unique idiom. When not laying waste to the English language, the characters are caught up in meaningless introspection, or making short work of mankind's scientific knowledge. Our mad scientist realizes that only by injecting blood directly from one's heart and into his creation can he make it more human; tell me if I'm wrong, but isn't the heart the source for all of one's blood? What would be the difference taking it directly from one's ticker compared to, say, a more convenient vein or artery? Plus, the plant is referred to as "cannibalistic," apparently because it eats meat and not vegetable matter. Given its unique nature, calling it a cannibal is erroneous regardless of how many puppies or people it decides to nibble on. Some of the implausibilities are taken to surreal extremes, especially when Bragan is wounded by the monstrosity, then grows a Venus Flytrap hand through which he feeds on small animals lest he weaken. And why anyone would put up with the temperamental scientist's unbelievable mood swings is completely beyond me; within hours of meeting him for the first time, even the most submissive or easygoing person would have given this geriatric poster child for bipolar disorder the finger and forcefed him a fistful of lithium.

The film's failings are not reserved to its literary merit, by any means. Our resident monster looks like he stepped out of a failed casting call for *Ultra Man*, with his tentacled head and Flytrap-like appendages. (Yes, he eats things with his feet as well as his hands.) The props department apparently couldn't lay their hands on real electrodes with which to pass a live current between (the kind that has been used in every low rent mad scientist flick made in the last seventy years), so they opted to have an artist painstakingly paint one directly onto hundreds of frames of film. At one point, the viewer is treated to some nauseating hand-held camerawork as the doctor and his assistant drive through the mountains; one can easily picture the cameraperson desperately trying to hang onto the back of the compact car with one hand, more concerned about losing the camera than losing the shot. The score is positively schizophrenic, with atonal compositions leading into something that could have been pilfered from an old western to the repetitive plucking of a single, abused taiko string that sounds just short of snapping. Then there is the sound engineer's obsession with random, often disconcerting animal noises. Of particular note is a rooster that is never seen

but always heard not more than a stone's throw away, interrupting conversations at the drop of a hat, day or night.

The film has virtually no gore, but it does contain some very surprising above-the-waist nudity. (Surprising in that the film was otherwise geared towards those of a more, shall we say, *elementary* education.) In addition to the aforementioned Japanese skin divers (the breeze coming in off the water was obviously cold, even *nippy,* if I may be so bold), there is also a scene where the kind doctor breaks into a local sanitarium and extracts some blood from an unconscious patient by jabbing a needle into her bared breast.

As if in keeping with its slipshod nature, this film—when originally released by Regal Video as *The Revenge of Doctor X*—caused much confusion as the synopsis and credits listed on the box were those for Gerardo de Leon and Eddie Romero's classic of trash horror, *The Mad Doctor of Blood Island* (1968). This was not uncommon. Wizard Video released a handful of films with erroneous box information as well, but Regal went so far as to even video-burn the incorrect credits on the beginning of the film. Worse yet, when New Horizons Home Video bought out Regal's back catalog and re-released the film with new box art, the inaccurate information was carried over verbatim. One can't find a copy of this for sale on eBay without having the seller mistakenly trying to pass it off as an entry in the Filipino *Blood Island* trilogy.

Prolific actor Craig (1912–85) was also in Anthony Cardoza's only passable exploitation flick the previous year, the no budget backwoods horror film *Bigfoot* (1969), the only other creature feature to his credit besides *The Cyclops* (1957). Actor Yagi was also in two classic *kaijû eiga* [giant sized monster] films, namely *Sora no Daikaijû Radon* [Radon, Monster from the Sky] (1956) aka *Rodan*, and in the American release version of *Kingukongu Tai Gojira* [King Kong vs Godzilla] (1962).

Director Crane made two other horror films prior to this, *Monster from Green Hell* (1958) and *The Manster* (1962), the latter of which—in addition to being a classic of trash horror—is also a deliriously absurd Japanese-American co-production. In 1957, he also directed some inserts with actors John Carradine and Forrest Tucker for the American release of Ishirô Honda's abominable snowman flick *Half Human* (1957); unfortunately, it didn't fare as well as the Americanization of Honda's *Gojira* (1954), which was released in the US three years later as *Godzilla.* Crane spent most of his twenty seven year film career as an editor of exploitation fare.

If anything else could be said, *The Double Garden* is guaranteed to please those unfortunate souls looking for the cinematic equivalent of Eerie Publications' hastily illustrated shockers. (Throw in a werewolf staking a vampire, and you have a cover story as well.)

L'Etrusco Uccide Ancora (1972)

THE ETRUSCAN KILLS AGAIN

Mondial [It] CCC Filmkunst GmbH [WG] Inex Film [Yu] DIR: Armando Crispino PRO: Artur Brauner and Mondial Tefi SCR: Lucio Battistrada and Armando Crispino [Italian Version] SCR: Lutz Eisholz [West German Version] SCR: Caslav Damjanovic [Yugoslavian Version] [Based on a short story by Bryan Edgar Wallace] DOP: Erico Menczer MUS: Riz Ortolani STR: Enzo Cerusico, Alex Cord, Wendy d'Olive, Pier Luigi d'Orazio, Carlo de Mejo, Samantha Eggar, Horst Frank, Mario Maranzana, John Marley, Vladan Milasinovic, Ivan Pavicevac, Daniela Surina, Enzo Tarascio, Nadja Tiller and Christina von Blanc (aka Christiane von Blank)

AKA: The *Dead Are Alive*

El Etrusco Sigue Matando [The Etruscan

Continues Killing]

Die Etrusker [The Etruscan]

Das Geheimnis des Gelben Grabes [The Secret of the Yellow Grave]

The Killer Must Kill Again

Over Time

Approximately 105m; Color; Rated R

DVD: The *Killer Must Kill Again* [Mondo Macabro USA; RTU; WS; English Subtitles; NTSC R1]

VHS: *Das Geheimnis des Gelben Grabes* [Video Erscheinungstermin; 93m; NTSC]

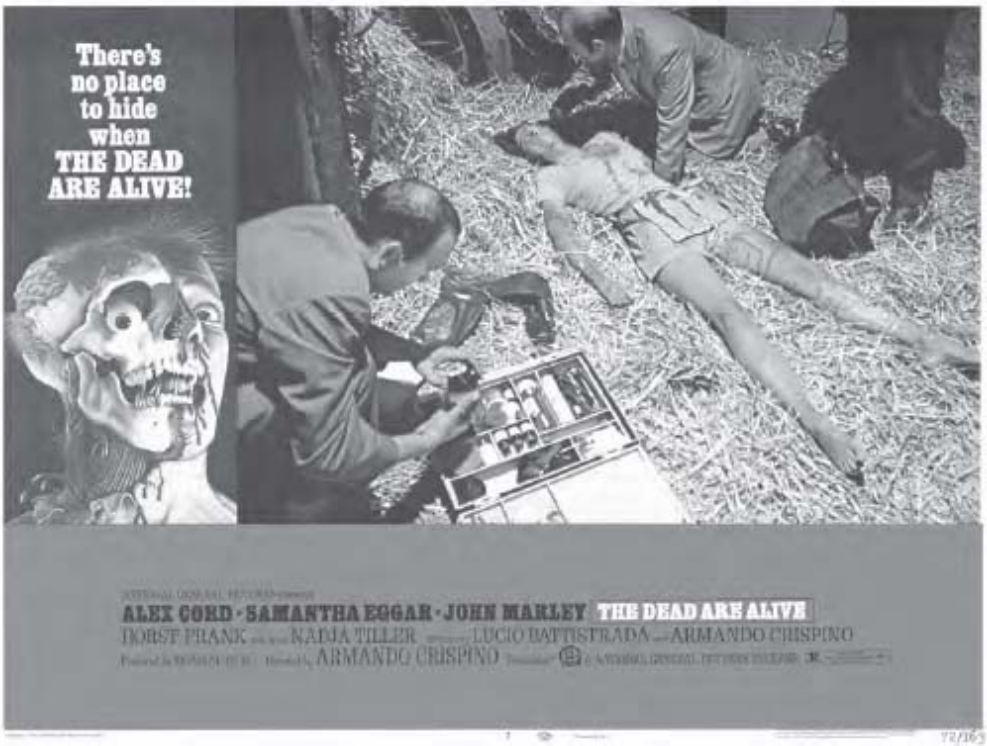
ADL: “There’s no Place to Hide when the Dead are Alive!”

EL DIOS DE LA MUERTE
VUELVE DE SU TUMBA
PARA VENGARSE..!
ALEX CORD · SAMANTHA EGGAR · JOHN MARLEY · NADJA TILLER en
EL ETRUSCO SIGUE MATANDO
ENZO TARASCIO · HORST FRANK · DANIELA SURINA
ARMANDO CRISPINO
a colores

Mexican lobby card for L’Etrusco Uccide Ancora (1972) Mondial/CCC Filmkunst GmbH/Inex Film

A DIPSOMANIACAL PROFESSOR (Alex Cord) and his archeological team unearth an Etruscan tomb, the murals on its walls depicting a series of violent deaths of the ancient inhabitants at the hands of the Etruscan devil god Tuchulka. While getting sweaty in some nearby ruins, a couple is disposed of in a fashion similar to that shown in the ancient paintings before they can peel off a stitch of clothing. The mysterious killer ritualistically announces his presence with a tape-recorded snippet of Verdi’s Requiem, this particular performance orchestrated by one Nikos Samarakis (John Marley), a verbally abusive maestro who—coincidentally—is married to the Professor’s sexually frustrated ex-wife Myra (Samantha Eggar). The murders continue, with the drunken archeologist topping the list of prime suspects.

Not entirely surprising, this film was directed by the same man responsible for *Macchie Solari* [Sun Spots] (1973) aka *Autopsy;* although *L'Etrusco Uccide Ancora* boasts the same scummy feel as its predecessor, this clunky giallo thriller isn't nearly as engaging. All the characters are uninteresting and unappealing—from the scummy hero to the browbeating conductor to the security guard who gets his kicks from immolating live insects—and most spend their screen time insulting or yelling at one another. When it isn't hostile, the character interaction is simply awkward, and the resulting melodrama stifling. (Okay, so the same could be said for much of *Macchie Solari;* for reasons that elude me, Crispino's earlier film has more going for it, at least for yours truly.) Whereas *Macchie Solari* exploited sexual frigidity, this film handles the subject of chronic alcoholism with only a bit more tact. In *L'Etrusco Uccide Ancora*, the personality disorder of the week is not so much a lynchpin, but an ineffectual red herring. There is a feeble attempt to throw the viewer off the killer's trail; unfortunately, an alibi only serves to draw attention *towards* the real culprit, someone whom we probably wouldn't have expected otherwise. But, hey, what can one expect from scriptwriters who insist that a woman's hair never grows more than six inches once her locks have been torched? Not much, really, and that's exactly what one gets: not much.



US lobby card for L'Etrusco Uccide Ancora (1972) National General Pictures

L'Etrusco Uccide Ancora also suffers from poor editing and—in the case of the English language release—regrettable dubbing. (The dialogue sounds as if it was lifted from a porn film.) To make matters worse, someone didn't bother to erase all the original Italian dialogue before dubbing over it on some of the prints in circulation. If you do decide to seek out this film, but you don't feel like investing in an economy size bottle of extra strength Tylenol as well, I strongly urge you to steer clear of any English language editions and instead take on the role of archeologist and dig up something by way of subtitles. (An original European version may also be better than the truncated ninety seven minute bootleg that has made the rounds, but I fear that—although it may clarify some matters—the additional footage probably amounts to little more than excess baggage.) Sorry, but interesting backdrops, nasty bloodshed and an abundance of bellbottoms is not enough to qualify *L'Etrusco Uccide Ancora* as an above average giallo thriller.

Actress Samantha Eggar (1939–) occasionally wandered onto the set of a genre effort, starring in the good—David Cronenberg's *The Brood* (1979),

the bad—Denis Héroux's *The Uncanny* (1977), and the shoddy—Alfredo Zacharias' *Macabra, La Mano del Diablo* [Macabre, the Hand of the Devil] (1979) *aka Demonoid.* Prolific actor Horst Frank (1929–99) also appeared in such giallos as Dario Argento's *Il Gatto a Nove Code* [The Cat o' Nine Tails] (1971) and Mario Caiano's *L'Occhio nel Labirinto* [The Eye in the Labyrinth] (1972) aka *Blood.* Towards the end of his film career, character actor Carlo de Mejo (1945–) appeared in a slew of Italian splatter films, including some of Lucio Fulci's better known shockers. De Mejo is also the son of Alida Valli (1921–), a once respectable actress who later eked out a living with exploitation fare as well.

L'Etrusco Uccide Ancora was based on a short story by Bryan Edgar Wallace (1904–71), son of prolific mystery writer Edgar Wallace (1875–1932) who, in addition to penning *King Kong* (1933), was almost singlehandedly responsible (posthumously, I might add) for the German krimi film movement of the sixties. Wallace Jr has since been established as a screenwriter for Dario Argento's first three efforts, the far superior giallos *L'Uccello dalle Piume di Cristallo* [The Bird with the Crystal Plumage] (1970), *Il Gatto a Nove Code* and *Quatro Mosche di Velluto Grigio* [Four Flies on Gray Velvet] (1971).

Director Crispino (1925–) capped a modest ten year career as a filmmaker with the obscure sex comedy *Frankenstein all'Italiana* [Frankenstein Italian style] (1975).

Il Fiume del Grande Caimano (1979)

THE RIVER OF THE GREAT CAIMAN

> Dania Film [It] DIR: Sergio Martino PRO: Luciano Martino SCR: Maria Chianetta, Ernesto Gastaldi, Sergio Martino and Luigi Montefiori DOP: Giancarlo Ferrando SFX: Carlo de Marchis and Paolo Ricci MUS: Stelvio Cipriani STR: Rene Abadeza, Barbara Bach, Peter Boom, Claudio Cassinelli, Fabrizia Castagnoli, Silvia Collatina, Clara Colosimo, Giulia d'Angelo, Paul de Odeasie, Lory del Santo, Donald Dias, Christopher Ferrando, Mel Ferrer, Enzo Fisichella, Marco Giannoni, Geneve Hutton, Richard Johnson, Piero Jossa, Marco Mastantuono, Anny Papa, Peter Peiris, Romano Puppo, Bobby Rhodes and D Pauline Skilton

AKA: *Alligators*

The Big Alligator River

Der Fluβ der Mörderkrokodile [The River of the Killer Crocodile]

The Great Alligator

Great Alligator River

Approximately 83m; Color; Rated R

DVD: The*Big Alligator River* [No Shame USA; RTU; WS; NTSC 0] *Der Fluβ der Mörderkrokodile* [X-Rated Kult; 85(83)m; WS; PAL R2] VHS: *The Great Alligator* [Edde Entertainment; 96(83)m; FS; NTSC]

ADL: “Say Goodbye to the Rich and Famous!”

A SMALL STRETCH of African jungle is cleared for Paradise House, a ritzy resort that— in addition to offering wealthy patrons a chance to get away from it all—claims to improve the local natives’ standard of living. Photographer Daniel Nessel (Claudio Cassinelli) is hired to capture the tribal customs and the exotic landscape for the resort’s travel brochures, and—along with potential love interest Alice Brandt (Barbara Bach), an anthropologist-cum-tour guide—finds himself in a bit of a stew. A couple making like the beast with two backs receive a post coital love bite from an overgrown gecko, a monster the tribespeople believe is the earthly manifestation of their god Cruna. The natives become exceedingly restless and urge the foreigners to leave posthaste, while our heroes encourage the less than receptive director of Paradise House to shut down the festivities, but… well, you know the words.

Mexican lobby card for Il Fiume del Grande Caimano (1979)

Why is it that filmmakers are unable to tell the difference between alligators and crocodiles (or caimans and gavials, for that matter, but let's not split hairs), and use the names of related but different species interchangeably? Probably for the same reason they insist on putting live tarantulas in webs. Easy. They're cheap, and assume horror fans to be too stupid to notice the pathetic cup and ball tactics. Or they are ignorant themselves. Either way, it's irritating, to say the least.

That gripe out of the way, this very Italian Jaws-in-the-tropics sticks to the formula established by Steven Spielberg four years previous, and perpetuated by such memorable entries as Joe Dante's *Piranha* (1978). Knowing full well it cannot compete with such predecessors, *Il Fiume del Grande Caimano* tries to up the ante by making the natives an even more formidable threat than the titular monster, thus playing on the ethnophobic fears already exploited by numerous Green Hell efforts. (Like many of the European cannibal films, *Il Fiume del Grande Caimano* also makes good use of its exotic locale, a nice change of pace to Spielberg and Dante's more mundane backdrops.) Performances are for the most part decent (but not

exceptional), with contributions from such higher caliber B-names as Mel Ferrer (1917—), Richard Johnson (1927–), and last but not least Barbara Bach (1947–). Bach suffered similar indignities in Sergio Martino's *L'Isola degli Uomini Pesce* [The Isle of the Fishmen] (1979), which was re-edited with new gore footage and released stateside as *Screamers* in 1982.

The undisputed star of this film, of course, is the alligator itself. (Or crocodile, or caiman, or whatever the heck it's supposed to be.) Although a few miniature shots are lousy (no matter how well it is staged or shot, a dime store rubber alligator will always look like a dime store rubber alligator), some of the close ups are good and the life size saurian quite passable.

Be warned: being a sucker for giant 'gator flicks (and crocodile flicks and, well, any flick involving large aquatic lizards with razor sharp teeth and a yen for *puaka balava),* I'm extremely biased. (Although Tobe Hooper's *Crocodile* [2000] and its equally laborious sequel gave me pause—even I have something akin to standards.)

The Fun House (1973)

> Today Productions, Inc. [US] DIR: Roger Michael Watkins (aka Victor Janos) PRO: Roger Michael Watkins (aka Norman F Kaiser) SCR: Roger Michael Watkins (aka Brian Laurence aka Brian Lawrence) DOP: Ken Fisher (aka Alexander Tarsk) SFX: Kevin Heatley MFX: Kevin Heatley MUS: Roger Michael Watkins (aka Claude Armand) STR: Nan L Bernstein, Pat Canestro (aka Elaine Norcross), Alan Cooper, Dennis Crawford, Kathy Curtin (aka Janet Sorley), Doreen Ellis, Ken Fisher (aka Dennis Crawford), Paul M Jensen (aka Paul Phillips), Barb McGraw, Howard Neilsen, Suzie Neumeyer (aka Geraldine Sanders aka Geraldine Saunders), Edward E Pixley (aka Franklin Statz), Helene Roberts, Ken Rouse (aka Ronald Cooper), Bill Schlageter (aka Lawrence Bornman), Steve Sweet (aka Alex Kregar), Nora Tucker, Nancy Vrooman (aka Barbara Amunsen), and Roger Michael Watkins (aka Steven Morrison) AKA: *The Last House on Dead End Street* Approximately 78m; Color; Rated R DVD: *Last House on Dead End Street* [Barrel Entertainment; 78m; WS; NTSC R1] VHS: *Last House on Dead End Street* [Sun Video Distribution Company; 90(76)m; FS; NTSC] ADL: "A Gothic Tale

of a House that Turned Fun and Games into an Orgy of Agony and Death!”

I ORIGINALLY reviewed this movie in my book *The Gorehound’s Guide to Splatter Films of the 1960s & 1970s* [McFarland Publishing; 2001]. Suffice to say, having sought it out and being sorely disappointed by what I found, I pretty much panned it. Well, that was some years ago, and I felt that—in light of the red carpet treatment now given it on DVD—it was time to reevaluate this pesky cult ‘classic’. (Previously, the only legit release was from a fly by night video outfit that released this and León Klimovsky’s *Último Deseo* [The Last Desire] (1976) aka *The People Who Own the Dark* in 1981, unbeknownst even to many hardcore video collectors.) Unfortunately, in the midst of all the kudos it’s been receiving from the underground press, I can tell you now that—alas—I will continue to bear the brand of a philistine.

Terry Hawkins (played by director and jack of all trades Watkins) is a bottom feeder just out of prison for the possession and sale of narcotics. Bearing a mile wide grudge against society, the lowlife pusher hooks up with a couple of struggling filmmakers and two hippie prostitutes, forming his own little cinematically inclined version of Charles Manson’s Family. Using an abandoned school as a backdrop, the five of them begin work on a feature length film that is destined to put them on the map… if only because it captures the actual onscreen deaths of several reluctant performers. (“Nobody is interested in sex anymore,” Hawkins points out emphatically.) On the upside, *The Fun House* posits some interesting comments about our jaded society, in a way that could have only been addressed in the early seventies. Furthermore, this film exploits the snuff film myth six years before Michael and Roberta Findlay’s film *Slaughter* was revamped, repackaged and re-released as the infamous *Snuff* (1976), making it essential viewing to anyone interested in this urban legend. Technically, *The Fun House* makes no attempt to be slick, and therein lies its greatest success. The film’s stark approach—highlighted by the cinéma vérité style staging and voiceover exposition that breaks the sparse score—contributes to the desperate, grainy atmosphere that complements the bleak subject matter. At times, the effect is overwhelming.

US pressbook advertisement for The Fun House (1977) Cinematic Releasing

On the downside, the movie is painfully uninteresting and so bleak that viewers like myself find it impossible to care about anything, whether it is the players, the proceedings, or anything pertinent the filmmaker may be trying to say. Of course, the film could never live up to its reputation; being virtually unseen until recent years, this film became something of a grail amongst both splatterpunks and fans of horror obscuros. Outside this context, *The Fun House* is a curiosity of hard edged seventies cinema; in light of the hype, it is a truly disappointing affair.

For trashfiends, there are plenty of scenes that sound tempting in print, but aren't nearly as diverting as one would hope. Anyone who's looked into this film knows about a half naked woman in blackface being knouted by a guy doing bad Igor impersonations, and the scene of a victim forced to fellate a preserved deer's hoof, but—trust me— none of this is nearly as interesting as it sounds, and far more tedious than it should be.

For the hardcore splatterpunks, extreme gore punctuates the bulk of the murders. The violence escalates from strangling to branding to stabbing; later, the assaults take on a harder edge, from dismemberments to evisceration to the drilling of one poor sap's eye with a Black & Decker. (Some of these scenes have been long since truncated from most of the

prints that have been circulated on videocassette, so now's the time to dump your worn out third generation bootleg and upgrade to this definitive DVD edition.) Unfortunately, most of the effects work is poorly executed, and is on a par with Simon Nuchturn's tacked on gore footage from the aforementioned *Snuff*. Even more unfortunate, the viewer is eased into the staged atrocities with slop buckets full of nauseating slaughterhouse footage. Those already jaded by the real thing will laugh at the effects laden deaths that follow; those only interested in stage blood and prosthetics will feel doubly cheated.

"For a good horror film you've gotta have some good actors," Watkins insists at one point. I'm inclined to agree, which is only one more reason why I can't wholly recommend this film.

Although the film was originally made in 1973 under the working title of *The Cuckoo Clocks of Hell*, it wasn't released until 1977 where it was re-edited and released through Cinematic Releasing under its more notorious moniker of *The Last House on Dead End Street*… much to the surprise of the director. Having lost the rights to his own film somewhere along the way, this unreleased 16mm production—rumored to have been made on a measly $800—was now raking in millions on the drive-in circuit. A few years later, filmmaker Watkins (1948–) kicked off a ten year career making hardcore porn films, ironic considering how his character Terry Hawkins maligns the lot of them in *The Fun House*.

If you happen to think this film is the cat's meow, then Barrel Entertainment's DVD release should more than placate you. (I only hope that in time this kind of respect is given to other obscure and—in my humble opinion—more deserving genre efforts.) The number of extras loaded onto the two disks—accompanied by a thirty two page booklet—is stifling, and is sure to sate those who insist on gleaning every little facet of information about the film and the people behind it, much of which yours truly found far more interesting than the film in question. (In one interview, Watkins claims to have been hopped up on amphetamines while making this picture; the film could have been more engrossing if only the viewer could share in his drug fueled enthusiasm.) The most disturbing rumor surrounding *The Fun House* is that there was or—even worse— may still exist an uncut 175 minute version of this film. Please, please tell me it isn't so.

The Green Slime (1968)

Toei Company, Ltd [Ja] Ram Films, Inc. [US] DIR: Kinji Fukasaku PRO: Walter Manley and Ivan Reiner SCR: William Finger, Tom Rowe and Charles Sinclair DOP: Yoshikazu Yamasawa SFX: Nihon Special Effects Company, Ltd MUS: Charles Fox and Toshiaki Tsushima STR: Enver Altenbay, Ann Ault, Carl Bengs, Tom Conrad, Robert Dunham, Patricia Elliot, Lynne Frederickson, Guther Greve, Ted Gunther, Linda Hardisty, Kathy Horan, Robert Horton, Clarence Howard, Richard Hylland, Strong Ilimaiti, Richard Jaeckel, Hans Jorgseeberger, Helen Kirkpatrick, Linda Maison, Burr Middleton, Linda Miller, Bob Morris, Jack Morris, Luciana Paluzzi, Don Plante, Gary Randolf, Tom Scott, David Sentman, Susan Skersick, Arthur Stark, George Uruf, Eugene Vince, Bud Widom and David Yorston

AKA: *Bataille au-delà des Etoiles* [Battle Beyond the Stars]

Batalla Mas Alla de las Estrellas [Battle Beyond the Stars]

Il Fango Verde [The Green Mud]

Gammo Sango Uchu Daisakusen [Battle of Space Station Gamma]

Ölmek Zamani Degil

Approximately 90m; Color; Unrated

DVD: The *Green Slime* [R3 Video; 90m; WS; NTSC R2]

VHS: The *Green Slime* [MGM/UA Home Video; 89 (90)m; FS; NTSC]

ADL: “The Green Slime are Coming!”

A CLASS TWO asteroid nicknamed Flora is on a collision course with Earth, so with only ten hours to spare, top officers Jack Rankin (Robert Horton) and Vince Elliott (Richard Jaeckel) are sent to plant high explosive charges in the rock and take it out of commission. (Once the best of friends,

they find themselves butting heads over Lisa, a redhead who is now Vince's fiancée.) Although the mission is a success, a mishap spells trouble for Space Station Gamma 3 when an alien life form stows away in the spacesuit of a scientist just along for the ride. Indiscriminately feeding off whatever energy source is handy, the titular space bogey grows into a lumpy, two-legged cyclopean critter with tentacles and lobster claws that electrocute anyone on contact. Much to their chagrin, the crew discovers not only is it difficult to kill, but it can also reproduce itself from a single drop of its own blood à la *The Thing* (1982). With testosterone spattering the backdrop, the heroes spend the remainder of the film arguing over how to control the rampant infestation.

The Green Slime hits the big time with a cover nod. Famous Monsters of Filmland #57 (September 1969) Warren Publishing

The Green Slime bears all the telltale marks of sixties sci fi, a dead zone of futura nouveau hokum that made the fifties equivalent shine in comparison. Granted, this film isn't nearly as excruciating to watch as many of its Italian counterparts, but it wouldn't matter one iota if it were. Why? Because *The Green Slime* boasts the catchiest theme song that Jack Jones never performed but probably wished he had. This title track— written by

Sherry Gaden—is rumored to have been performed by Richard Delvy (né Delvecchio), a founding member of The Bel-Aires and The Challengers who is also credited with The Surfaris' number one hit Wipe Out. Here, the ex-surf musician displays real cahunas by crooning passionately about space boogers. In a perfect world, this would be our national anthem, and not even Roseanne Barr would have the indecency to butcher it in front of millions. (Garage rockers The Ubangis performed a faithful version of the song at the 2001 Chiller Theatre convention, which is slated to appear on a forthcoming CD compilation from Brutarian.) "Same old garbage… nothing exciting ever happens around here," one character on the sidelines remarks early on. I would say a prophetic statement of things to come in this film, if it wasn't for the fact that *The Green Slime* is a truly exhilarating low in the annals of sci fi cinema. The fact that Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer released this film the same year as Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* begs the question, "Who was minding the store?" (It seems fitting, however, since *The Green Slime* marks the end of an era for a particular breed of space opera that arguably began with *This Island Earth* (1955) and became obsolete upon the release of Kubrick's vision.) Jealous that Europe had cornered the market on bargain basement space flicks, Japan and the United States pooled their resources to prove that they too could churn out a product just as inept. Although there's nary an Asian in sight, *The Green Slime* boasts *kaijû eiga* style miniatures and sets; not surprisingly they were supplied by Toei, the very same studio that blessed us with everyone's favorite oversized tusked tortoise, Gamera. Once our space boogers reach maturity (if anything within the context of this particular film can be referred to as mature), they smack of *Ultra Man* extras that have lost their way. Give any one of them a big, toothy smile, and they would be just as content lounging about on the set of Sid & Marty Krofft's *Sigmund and the Sea Monsters* (1973–75). Live sparklers attached to the creatures' tentacles (which illustrate the electrical current their bodies generate, natch) are as innovative as the special effects get, although even the most farsighted viewers will be too distracted by the wireworks to notice any fireworks.

The screenwriters try to elevate the grade school theatrics with turgid melodrama that, by the way, only succeeds in alienating younger viewers as well as any adults lucky enough to be present. Luckily, they come to the realization that the destruction of the planet Earth wasn't cataclysmic enough, so the writers dispense with this plot device within the first thirty

minutes in order to get to the real meat of the movie… namely, a horde of rubber monsters hijacking a space station. (Apparently, someone in Hollywood saw even more potential in it without the monsters, as they recycled the first two acts for a much pricier *Armageddon* in 1998.) The military is portrayed as infinitely smarter than the scientists, especially when dealing with extraterrestrial life forms, so science and common sense suffer innumerable blows when they aren't simply being ignored. Alas, both suffer even more at the hands of the scriptwriters. Humans, having achieved the technological means to colonize much of the solar system, have failed to notice that an asteroid large enough to take out the Earth is only hours away from doing just that. Monsters, whose sole diet is energy, will ignore large electrical apparatus in favor of flashlights powered by D cell batteries? The list is endless.

In a vain attempt to invest the film with *some* inkling of respectability, the performers play it straight and with surprising conviction. Horton, the no nonsense commander with his shoot-first-ask-questions-later attitude, is at constant odds with Jaeckel, a knee-jerk boy scout who has a knack for risking the lives of the many for the safety of a few, and it is this dysfunctional working relationship we can thank for the mayhem that ensues. Had the two characters actually shared a coherent thought, *The Green Slime* would have had to change its name and figure out how to pad out the remaining sixty minutes of lost footage.

The Green Slime—which has achieved something of a cult status amongst trash filmgoers— does move at a brisk pace; very much like a deer caught in a car's headlights, the viewer has little time to regain their composure and step out of the way before the full ninety minutes has barreled over them. Those who envision the idyllic future as one steeped in sixties fashions and radio-friendly music won't even think to touch their remote, unless it's to turn up the volume. (It could be worse… think of all those post apocalyptic films made in the eighties where *that* decade's pop culture is the dominant one. Jeepers.) Rumor has it that there was an alternate version produced for the Japanese market that included far fewer Caucasians cluttering the stage. (Most of the American-born extras were allegedly drafted from Tachikawa Air Force Base; unfortunately, the presence of real military personnel—regardless of their nationality—does little to heighten the film's realism.) It is also rumored that *The Green Slime*

inspired the classic TSR board game *The Awful Green Things from Outer Space.*

With over sixty films to his credit, director Fukasaku (1930–2003) went on to co-direct *Tora! Tora! Tora!* (1970) and become the head of the Director's Guild of Japan in 1996. Actor Horton (1924–) was a familiar face in westerns and war films, and had a five year stint playing Flint McCullough in the television series *Wagon Train* (1957–65). B-action star Jaeckal (1926–97) is known to genre fans for his roles in numerous killer animal flicks, including William Girdler's *Grizzly* (1976) and *Day of the Animals* (1977). Actress Luciana Paluzzi (1937–) later sexed it up in Jesús Franco Manera's women-in-prison classic *99 Mujeres* [99 Women] (1969), as well as starring in an episode of *The Six Million Dollar Man* in 1973.

C'mon, people… you know the words. Sing along with me! "You'll believe it when you find… something screaming across your mind… *green sli-i-ime… green sli-i-ime… green sli-i-ime…"*

Hey, where is everybody going?

The Incredible 2-Headed Transplant (1971)

> Mutual General Corporation [US] DIR: Anthony M Lanza PRO: John Lawrence SCR: John Lawrence and James Gordon White DOP: Glen Gano, Paul Hipp and Jack Steely EXP: Nicholas Wowchuk MFX: Barry Noble SFX: Ray Dorn MUS: John Barber STR: John Bloom, Donald Brodie (aka Donald Brody), Mary Ellen Clawsen, Albert Cole, Leslie Cole, Hill Collins, Bruce Dern, Darlene Duralia, Jack English, Mike Espe, Janice P Gelman, Carolyn Gilbert, Casey Kasem, Berry Kroeger, Laura Lanza, Jack Lester, Robert Miller, Jerry Patterson, Pat Priest, Andrew Schneider, Eva Sorensen, Raymond Thorne (aka Ray Thorne) and Larry Vincent
>
> AKA: The *Incredible Transplant*
>
> *The Incredible Two Headed Transplant*
>
> Approximately 88m; Color; Rated GP DVD: The *Incredible Two Headed Transplant* [Madacy Entertainment; 86m; FS; NTSC R1;

Double billed with Invasion of the Bee Girls] [MGM Home Entertainment; 88m; WS; NTSC R1; Double billed with The Thing with Two Heads] VHS: The *Incredible Two Headed Transplant* [Gee Video; 87(86)m; FS; NTSC] [Madacy Entertainment; 86m; FS; NTSC; Double billed with Invasion of the Bee Girls] [Vintage Video; 86m; FS; NTSC]

ADL: “One Wants Love, One Wants to Kill! Two Heads Grafted to the Body of a Giant!”

MRS GIRARD (Pat Priest) is concerned for her hubby Roger (Bruce Dern), a scientist who spends all hours of the day in his laboratory grafting the heads of animals onto the bodies of their kin, creating a whole menagerie of two-headed critters. Killer Manuel Cass (Albert Cole)—found to be legally insane after brutally slaying nine people— breaks out of the loony bin and heads for the hills. Needing a place to lay low, he breaks into the home of the aforementioned Dr Girard and his wife, then takes the two prisoner and hacks up the family’s gardener. The groundskeeper is survived by his son Danny (John Bloom), an overgrown lug with the mentality of an eight year old, who suffered irreparable brain damage having been caught in a cave-in; suffice to say, he wigs out upon finding Daddy’s bloodied body.

After dispatching the intruder with a shotgun as the lunatic is making time with his captive wife, our just-as-buggy surgeon is talked into taking advantage of the opportunity by an assistant who is desperate for them to perfect the procedure. Soon, Manuel’s head has found a new home alongside Danny’s, and—unfortunate for all involved—the operation is a resounding success. (“Man… Dr Girard must’ve been brewing some of that Jekyll & Hyde joy juice in here,” one character remarks having seen the aftermath.) I won’t even *ask* how the scientists manage to splice together the spines and nervous systems of two separate animals. It’s all in a night’s work, I guess.

The Incredible 2-Headed Transplant is low rent, adequately made trash horror with all the fixings, not as outrageously contrived as, say, Independent-International’s efforts of the time, but thoroughly engaging nonetheless. This lurid shocker boasts a cool early seventies score with tremolo guitars and a jittery high hat, some gore, and a wonderfully dated scene where our resident two-headed freak gets into a tangle with some bikers. The film also boasts a few gems in the way of idiotic dialogue; when

a lab animal is found dead, the doctor explains, “Poor monkey… if this little guy had been healthy, he’d still be alive.” (Geez, he needed a degree to figure that out?) The film does suffer from some jarring, strobe-like edits, and the effects used for the cave-in that marks the film’s earth-shattering finale are pretty sad. As far as the makeup effects are concerned, the filmmakers do a passable job of editing between Bloom with an additional head appliance, and the two actors stuffed into the same pair of overalls. Groundbreaking technology it isn’t, but one has seen worse. (The same techniques would be improved upon the following year in AIP’s next two-headed creature feature, *The Thing with Two Heads.)* Although uncredited, the ape suit was designed (and probably worn) by award winning effects artist Rick Baker, who was just breaking into the business at the time. He would supply the same to AIP’s similarly contrived follow up.

Dern’s character is supposedly headed for a nervous breakdown, yet his performance is probably the most subdued of his career. In fact, downright lethargic may be a better way to describe his composure. He sees his gardener murdered with a hoe; he blows away a man attempting to rape his wife; and he condemns a retarded man to a hellish ordeal when he decides to graft the killer’s head onto his body; but he scarcely blinks or raises his voice throughout. That is, until someone calls him unexpectedly, which sparks an even more unexpected outburst. His sour disposition quickly returns to normal, until later when someone else suggests calling the Sheriff. And so it goes, the only thing getting his goat is Alexander Bell’s damnable invention; apparently the doctor suffers from telephone related anxieties to which we, the viewers, are not made privy.

Albert Cole’s killer is a leering, cackling psychopath who comes across as a low rent Jon Astin; his scenery chewing certainly accounts for the numerous gaps in his teeth. The film also introduces Bloom, a 7’4” tax accountant who moonlighted in exploitation films playing brain damaged hulks; here he kicks off an incredible list of similarly brain damaged productions that includes Al Adamson and Sam Sherman’s *Dracula vs Frankenstein* (which also had Cole in a bit part) and *Brain of Blood* (both 1971). Priest—the most popular actress to portray Marilyn, the only normal family member in *The Munsters* (1964–66)—plays Dern’s main squeeze; although her hair-don’t hasn’t changed a lick since the early years, the filmmakers certainly exploit her figure in ways the television show never dared. Even Scooby’s sidekick Shaggy—renowned voice actor and disc

jockey Casey Kasem—shows up sporting an embarrassing toupee, playing the mad doctor's best friend as well as contributing his talents as a radio announcer.

US pressbook advertisement for The Incredible 2-Headed Transplant (1971)
American International Pictures, Inc.

Director Lanza also made the violent biker flick *The Glory Stompers* (1967).

Although available through the years from various obscure video labels, a beautifully remastered and letterboxed version is available on DVD from MGM's Midnite Movies line of AIP double bills, and is presented completely uncut for the first time (not that we were missing much). Better yet, it shares the disk with Robert Lee Frost's *The Thing with Two Heads,* making this a very welcome double-headed double hitter.

So… where can I get me one of those two-headed bunny rabbits?

IT!(1967)

Seven Arts Productions [UK] Goldstar Productions Ltd [US] DIR: Herbert J Leder PRO: Herbert J Leder SCR: Herbert J Leder DOP: Davis Boulton EXP: Robert Goldstein MUS: Carlo Martelli STR: Raymond Adamson, John Baker, Mark Burns, Lindsay Campbell, Tom Chatto, Ernest Clark, Dorothy Frere, Richard Goolden, Brian Haines, Valeria Jill Haworth (aka Jill Haworth), Oliver Johnston, Steve Kirby, Roddy McDowall (aka Roddy MacDowall), Paul Maxwell, Ian McColloch, Russell Napier, Aubrey Richards, Alan Sellers, Frank Sieman and Noel Trevarthen

AKA: *Anger of the Golem*

Carrasco de Pedra [Executioner of Stone]

Curse of the Golem

La Estatua Viviente [The Living Statue]

Der Golem Lebt! [The Golem Lives]

Approximately 97m; Color; Unrated

ADL: “How can we Destroy it Before it Destroys us?”

ARTHUR PIMM (Roddy McDowall), the assistant curator at a museum, is a proper, likeable chap who has never gotten around to disposing of his mother’s corpse, which he keeps around for company. A warehouse used by the museum for storing artifacts burns to the ground; while rooting through the rubble for anything that could be salvaged, Arthur stumbles across a life size stone statue that dates back to the middle of the sixteenth century. The head curator dies a mysterious death, and a very angry Pimm is denied the position due to his young age. Unappeased by his meager £150 annual raise, the already unhinged assistant discovers the secret of the rediscovered Prague golem—a magic scroll bearing the word of God concealed in its hollow toe—and immediately puts this arcane knowledge to good use. Of course, wooing an unobtainable secretary (Jill Haworth) while cutting a swathe to the top takes priority above all else.

Firstly, there is no way I can be truly objective about this film. I remember my first and only exposure to chickenpox; I was six years old, and kept out of school for the better part of a week. One evening, unhindered by a school night's curfew, I stayed up to watch *It!* on the tube, which started at eleven. Within the half hour preceding it, I fell asleep while watching an episode of the controversial but short-lived sitcom *Hot L Baltimore* (1975), and didn't reawaken until the last fifteen minutes of the film, where I was barely conscious enough to appreciate it. This would be the last time any local station would show *It!* for the remainder of the seventies, although I waited those many, many years with baited breath. During the video boom of the eighties, I longed for a sell-through company to give this film a proper release, but no such luck. The nineties proved no more fruitful. Only a few short years ago, I finally acquired a copy from a friend who had recorded it from television; by this time, *It!* had become a childhood grail. So, if my review sounds at all reverential, please do not mistake this for critical admiration. Believe you me, the film has a few problems.

Aside from its nostalgic charm (at least as far as this reviewer is concerned), *It!* has a fair amount going for it. The film has the look and feel of some of the later Hammer outings, which isn't much of a surprise when one considers that Seven Arts collaborated with England's reigning horror studio on many illustrious occasions. Although the budget was undoubtedly modest, the film looks sharp throughout.

US lobby card for *It!* (1966) Seven Arts Associated Corporation

The film's high points, though, are McDowall and his ruddy co-star. Despite his reservations about the film itself—McDowall never had a kind word to say about *It!*—Roddy turns in a typically ingratiating performance. (As most filmgoers are probably aware, he made his greatest contribution to fantastic cinema when he donned the role of Cornelius in Franklin J Schaffner's 1968 classic *Planet of the Apes,* the character with whom he is still most often identified by geeks like ourselves. McDowall also helmed something of a genre film in 1971, the somewhat pretentious *The Ballad of Tam Lin,* his sole directorial outing. The film was poorly received in part due to misguided marketing by American International Pictures, which attempted to play up its implied supernatural elements.) Although the character of Arthur Pimm is a delusional megalomaniac, McDowall avoids playing him as a stereotypically raving lunatic, and makes no attempt to mimic Anthony Perkins' twitchiness, even though the character was obviously modeled on Norman Bates. (Presumably as an in joke, one of the players is even named Perkins.) The golem has a very distinctive mien, which would best be described as a sculpture of Zippy the Pinhead molded from half melted

candle wax. Unfortunately, the budget dictated that an actor play the part of the golem even before it is brought to life as a killing machine; it is safe to say that even the most wooden actor would be unable to hold completely still for as long as the scenes demand, thus cluing us in early on that it is nothing more than a person in a papier-mâché costume and not a stone statue awaiting re-animation.

UN ENGENDRO SATANICO QUE IRRADIA ODIO, MALDAD, DESTRUCCION
Y MUERTE POR TODAS PARTES!
LA ESTATUA VIVIENTE
¡UNA HISTORIA REALMENTE SATANICA!
RODDY McDOWALL JILL HAWORTH
HERBERT J. LEDER
UNA PRODUCCION GOLD STAR

Mexican lobby card for It! (1966) Seven Arts Associated Corporation

If one considers a conflation of Paul Wegener's *Der Golem* [The Golem] (1920) and Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) as crafty and innovative, then this contrived creature feature is as original as one gets. (Although, if you get right down to it, it's just as much a knock-off of the Universal mummy films, or at least the awful sequels that followed Boris Karloff's chilling contribution.) Thankfully, filmmaker Leder tempers the horror with tongue in cheek humor, but not so much to detract from the vengeance fueled goings-on. At one point, Mr Pimm is asked, "So that's your new piece?" to which he responds " Yes… that is… it." (His emphasis,

not mine.) Also, nearing the finale, an old woman who is forced to play host to Pimm and his desiccated mum exclaims, “One more tea with him and his mother will drive me mad!”

Despite some relatively minor lapses of common sense, the story holds up quite well… until the final reel, that is, when all logic is disregarded and the film spirals into pure lunacy. Once Pimm is found to be indirectly responsible for the murders, he holes up in a castle with his lust interest in tow. The military tries to enter the main gate with a single tank, but the shells prove useless against the golem. So, do they try to enter the property from, I don’t know, say, another gate while the extremely slow moving golem is distracted or just too far away to pose a threat? No. Do they send in armed paratroopers to rescue the damsel in distress and take out the guy controlling it? No. They simply give up, admit the palace is impregnable, and come to the conclusion that the only solution is to drop a nuclear bomb on the estate. (It’s “only a *small* warhead,” one of our brain trusts insists.) Honestly, the shifting of gears is so harsh that one might think one had switched channels had the same performers not been involved. I would have fancied the idea that the director died shortly before completing the project, and his imaginative five year old son with his own ideas of how the story should progress stepped in to wrap it up, had Leder not gone on to do another film.

This movie is also cool by its genre associations, in addition to McDowall’s contribution. Actress Haworth became something of a B-movie starlet with such films as Michael Armstrong’s *Horror House* (1969), Jim O’Connolly’s *Tower of Evil* (1972) and Jack Cardiff’s *The Mutations* (1973). After working alongside Peter Cushing in Freddie Francis’ *The Ghoul* (1974) McCulloch later made a name for himself in many a spaghetti splatter flick, including Lucio Fulci’s *Zombi 2* (1979) and Luigi Cozzi’s *Contaminazione* [Contamination] (1980).

Filmmaker Leder (1922–83)—who kicked off a sparse but noteworthy career by scripting the creepy and often surreal sci fi horror flick *Fiend Without a Face* (1958)—was also responsible for the so bad it’s good cult shocker *The Frozen Dead*, lensed the same year as, and later released on a double bill with, *It!*. A remake *of Fiend Without a Face* is currently under production.

So, just keep telling yourself… *It!* is only a movie… only a movie… only a movie…

LYCANTHROPUS (1961)

LYCANTHROPE

Royal Film Production [Ar/It] DIR: Paolo Heusch (aka Richard Benson) PRO: Guido Giambartolomei (aka Jack Forrest) SCR: Ernesto Gastaldi (aka Julian Berry) DOP: George Patrick MUS: Francis Berman STR: Anne Marie Avis, Lucy Derleth, Herbert Diamonds, Barbara Lass-Kwiatowska (aka Barbara Lass), Curt Lowens, Martha Marker, Maurice Marsac, Mary McNeeran, Patricia Meeker, Joseph Mercer, Grace Neame, Maureen O'Connor, Elizabeth Patrick, Luciano Pigozzi (aka Alan Collins), Carl Schell and Anni Steinert

AKA: *Bei Vollmond Mord* [The Full Moon Murders]

The Ghoul in School

Ghoul in a Girls' Dormitory

I Married a Werewolf

Monster Among the Girls

Werewolf in a Girls' Dormitory

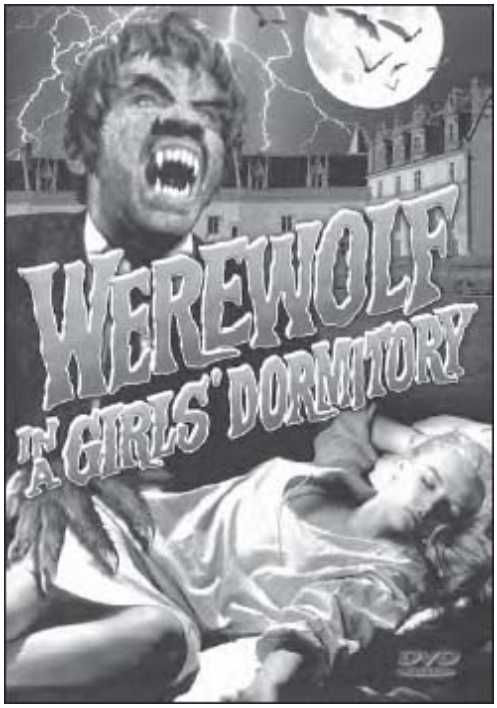
Approximately 83m; b&w; Unrated

DVD: *Werewolf in a Girls' Dormitory* [Alpha Video; 83m; FS; NTSC R1] [Madacy Entertainment; 83m; FS; NTSC R1; Double billed with Blood Creature] VHS: *Werewolf in a Girls' Dormitory* [Madacy Entertainment; 83m; FS; NTSC R1; Double billed with Blood Creature]

ADL: "Beauties! The Prey of a Monster's Desires!"

TRYING TO LEAVE behind a mysterious accident that left a young woman dead, the young Dr Julian Olcott (Carl Schell) takes up residence as a science professor at a private reformatory for girls; he's no sooner stepped

foot on school grounds when the hormonal students begin biting their knuckles over the tutor with the Tab Hunter-like good looks. This particular wolf in the fold is the least of the faculty's worries, for on the night of Olcott's arrival, one of the pupils, Mary, is attacked by a bestial killer when she cuts through the woods surrounding the school after dark. The fact that the underage seductress was on her way back from blackmailing a married lover seems to imply that her murder was not a random act of violence.



DVD box art for Lycanthropus (2004) Alpha Video Distributors, Inc. #4465-D

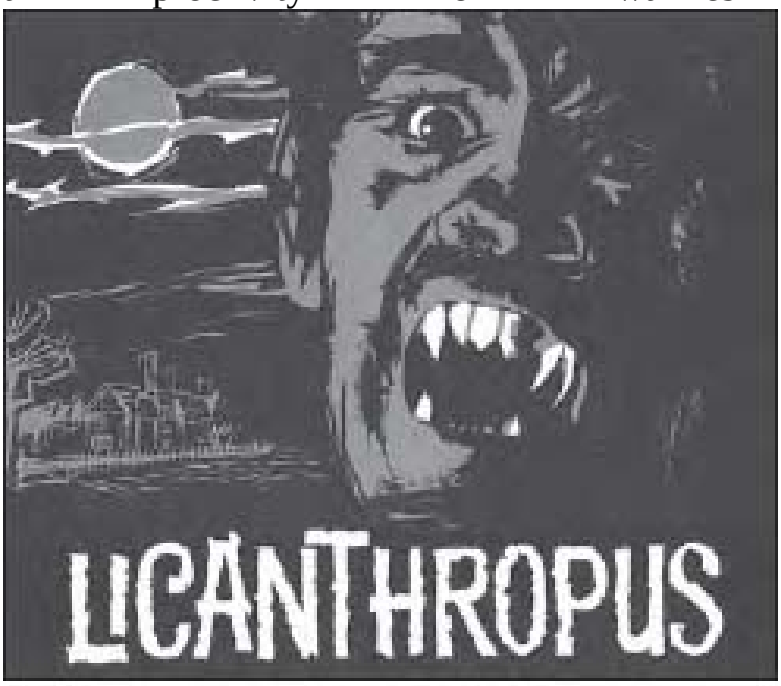
Suffice to say, everyone becomes a suspect. Was it the unfaithful, skirt chasing teacher with a yen for barely legal teens? Or, more likely, was it his jilted wife? Maybe it was the strict headmistress (Maureen O'Connor), seen stalking the grounds by two students the night of the murder? How about the creepy chauffeur? Or the even sleazier caretaker Walter (Luciano Pigozzi), whose buggy Peter Lorre-like countenance is more than enough to get him slapped with a suspicions charge, regardless of his alibi. Anyone not immune to the dashing newcomer's Aryan charms is laying odds on *him* as the culprit, which seems logical considering the skeletons in his closet,

compounded by the fact his appearance precipitated the fiendish murder. Hoping to clear himself of these unfounded accusations, Dr Olcott teams up with Priscilla (Barbara Lass-Kwiatowska), the closest thing to an eyewitness; with the script in need of some forced and maudlin romance, she proves to be no less susceptible to his pheromones than her horny peers.

Lycanthropus is an odd amalgam of old fashioned horror film and sixties giallo style murder mystery; the supernatural/pseudoscientific elements could be completely eliminated without affecting the story in the least, but it is this interesting little contrivance that gives the film an added oomph. Being Euro fare, the storyline is much more complex than it would have been had it been made in the States. It also displays elements that illustrate the growing demand for more risqué, graphic cinema at the time of its release, which of course comes across as fairly innocuous some forty odd years later.

Despite its best efforts, *Lycanthropus* never quite hits the intended target. The film displays camerawork and art direction typical of Italian gothic fare, but the brush strokes of an artist like Bava or Freda are nowhere to be found. The makeup effects on our resident werewolf prove effective when shone in the right light and staged with care, but prove inglorious when the monster strays into the open. (A little less putty and a little more yak hair would have helped considerably, for starters.) The script makes a determined attempt to provide a scientific explanation for lycanthropy, but laying the blame on a faulty pituitary gland proves a little less than satisfactory. (Additionally, many viewers will be annoyed by numerous coincidences, from the hastily discovered antidote, to the fantastic revelation that the teacher’s previous brush with the law was the result of a lover who, conveniently enough, was also stricken with intermittent hairy knuckles and

a proclivity for walkies by moonlight.)



Top European pressbook advertisement for Lycanthropus (1961) Royal Film Production

Above Theme from Werewolf in a Girls' Dormitory. US single for The Ghoul In School (1961) Cub Records #K-9123

One of the film's biggest benefits is the presence of Barbara Lass-Kwiatowska (1940–95), an alluring young Polish actress who was married to Roman Polanski from 1959 to 1962. Her haunting beauty is not unlike that of Barbara Steele's, and like Ms Steele her talents weren't limited to her comeliness. The rest of the cast performs admirably as well, but she usually demands the viewer's full attention when onscreen. She had my attention, anyway.

This film stands out in director Heusch's filmography, as he devoted most of his time to action fare. Screenwriter Gastaldi (1934–) has much to his credit, having plied his wares for virtually every Italian filmmaker, from hacks like Umberto Lenzi and Fernando di Leo, to the Big Boot's very own Sergio Leone. He also conspired with exploitation mogul Sergio Martino on many 'illustrious' occasions. (Lurid giallos like *Lo Strano vizio della Signora Wardh* aka *Blade of the Ripper* and *I Corpi Presentano Tracce di Violenza Carnale* aka *Torso,* 1971 and 1973 respectively, come to mind.) As a bonus, American audiences were treated to *Lycanthropus*' own hip theme song, The Ghoul In School, written by Marilyn Stewart and Frank Owens, performed by The Fortunes with Adam Keefe. For those that care, this Motown inspired tune wouldn't be out of place accompanying a Something Weird Video promotional spot. This little ditty may have a charm all its own, but it does nothing to set the tone for the film to follow. (At least the Wurlitzer laden score that follows the opening credits will keep the closet go-go dancers from slipping on their dancing shoes for the remainder of the film.) MONSTER (1979)

> Academy International Distributors [US] DIR: Kenneth Hartford (aka Kenneth Herts) and Herbert L Strock PRO: Kenneth Hartford (aka Kenneth Herts) SCR: Kenneth Hartford (aka Kenneth Herts), Walter Roeber Schmidt, Garland Scott and Herbert L Strock NOV: Monster [Carousel Books; 1979; US PB edition] DOP: Arthur Fitzsimmons and John Wilder Mincey SFX: Steve Czerkas, Kenneth Hartford and Marc Wolf MUS: Gene Kauer STR: Polo C'd Baca, Philip Carey, John Carradine, Monte Cook, Pam Day, Fred Anthony Eisley (aka Tony Eisley), Steven Fisher, Henry

Gabaldon, Andrea Hartford, Glen Hartford, Coral Kassel, John Lamarr, Carolyn Martin, Roberto Martinez, Jannine May, Leslie Meigs, Jim Mitchum, Connie Moore, Felicia Robbins, Maria Rubio, Aldo Sambrell, Emanuel Smith, Luis Suarez and the St Ann Choir

MONSTER
THE LEGEND THAT BECAME A TERROR!
PART ANIMAL. . . PART SHARK. . . ALL DEVIL!
IT HUNTS HUMANS ON LAND AND SEA!
THIS FILM IS A REENACTMENT OF FOUR DAYS OF TERROR THAT ROCKED THE SMALL VILLAGE OF CHIMAYO, COLOMBIA
MONSTER

US one-sheet for Monster (1979) Academy International Distributors

AKA: *It Came from the Lake*

Monster, the Legend that Became a Terror

Monstroid

The Toxic Horror

Toxic Monster

Approximately 78m; Color; Rated R

VHS: *It Came from the Lake* [Premiere Entertainment; 78m; FS; NTSC] Monster [InterGlobal Video; 85(78)m; FS; NTSC] [Regal Video; 78m; FS; NTSC] *The Toxic Horror* [Facing All Death; 78m; FS; NTSC]

ADL: “Buried in the Mud of Countless Centuries, Something has Begun to Grow…”

“THIS STORY you are about to see is based on fact. The incident occurred in June 1971 in Colombia.” Well, if you believe that, I have a Texas chain saw massacre I’d like to sell you. Heck, I’ll even throw in a couple of bona fide snuff films if you act now!

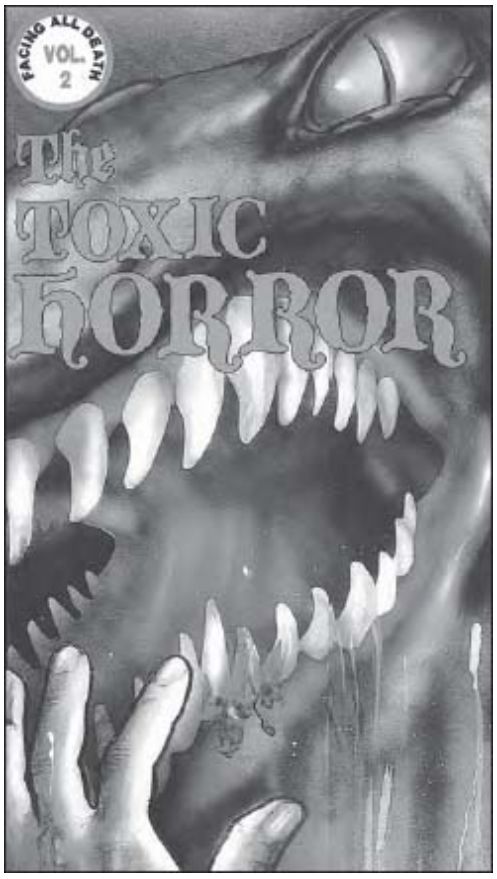
A big rubbery sea monster lurking just off the shores of a Colombian fishing village makes short work of unwary lovers straying onto the beach at night for a quick roll in the sand. One of its intended midnight snacks is a young native woman who makes the mistake of surviving the ordeal, claims she was attacked by a demon and is thus branded as a *bruja* by her superstitious neighbors (that’s “witch” for you gringos in the audience). It seems the pollutants being pumped into the water by a nearby cement plant —one of the largest in South America—has taken its toll on the fishermen’s livelihood… the very same catch that’s been keeping the behemoth’s belly full until now. An annoying reporter and a pesky revolutionary do their best to play up the tragedy, but not until Laura—the secretary and on-again, off-again lover of the plant’s owner—is found half eaten on the beach do the powers that be take action.

What should have been an entertaining low budget shocker, well, isn’t. *Monster’s* titular, uhm, monster takes back seat to the turgid melodrama that is mired in talking heads and uninteresting character interplay. (In retrospect, the relentless sermons on environmentalism and the exploitation of Third World countries with which the viewers are bludgeoned don’t seem so bad.) The scene of a hand puppet beastie chewing up and biting in half a bikini clad midnight swimmer would almost be worth the price of admission, but the remainder of the film is so gosh darn mind numbing as to make this little nugget no better than fool’s gold. For most of the film, the monster doesn’t rate more than a few minutes of screen time. Until the end, that is, when the viewer gets to see more of its mismatched seams than they probably ever expected or wanted to. (Okay, so he’s actually quite lovable with his hinged

jaw and Fu Manchu moustache. Scary no, but lovable, yes.) “You’re crazy if you think I’m going to spend the night out by this *stupid* lake fighting off mosquitoes waiting for you to get a *stupid* picture of a *stupid* monster that’ll probably turn out to be a *stupid* log or something,” one character complains. And it took no less than *four* screenwriters to dredge up such inspired dialogue? I can’t wait to get my hands on the paperback novelization from Carousel Books mentioned in the closing credits, if indeed it ever was published. (I’ve been looking, but—alas—no such luck.) Technically, the film is only a notch, maybe two, better than someone’s 8mm home movies. Of course, much of the footage looks like a vacation travelogue, so this may not be that far off the mark. Most of the above sea level footage was actually shot in South America, successfully capturing the local flavor; most of the underwater sequences, on the other hand, were filmed on location in someone’s swimming pool.

Some of the performers who made the mistake of wandering onto this particular set include James Mitchum (eldest son of Mr *Cape Fear* himself, Robert); Tony Eisley (whose long history of genre films includes having worked for Al Adamson, Ted V Mikels, Oliver Drake, and David L Hewitt—the latter of whom functioned as the mechanical effects artist on *Monster* as well); and a frail looking John Carradine (whose contributions to the genre are even more exhaustive than Eisley’s). One may be inclined to ask, “Why the long face, John?” (sorry… I just couldn’t resist) but I doubt any self respecting thespian would be pleased if they were forced to eke out a living in their golden years by slumming in movies like this. (Apparently, John confided to one of the film’s crew members on the set of *Monster,* “This is

the *worst* piece of shit I've ever worked on… and I've worked on a *lot* of pieces of shit.")



VHS box art for Monster (1988) Facing All Death Video #FAD-2

Director Hartford (aka Herts) helmed a handful of other exploitation films, as well as producing Herbert Strock's *The Devil's Messenger* (1962) starring Lon Chaney Jr, and scripting Mohy Quandour's obscure shocker *The Spectre of Edgar Allan Poe* (1964). Co-conspirator Strock (1918–) returned to the horror genre after a conspicuous sixteen year absence. One can't help but wonder why he would risk tarnishing a reputation that included *Blood of Dracula* (1957), *I Was a Teenage Frankenstein* (1957) and *The Crawling Hand* (1963) with this turkey.

As of this writing, the Internet Movie Database (IMDb) also lists the presence of actors Stella Calle, Roger Clark, Fernando Corredor, Jack Lamont, Diane McBain, Glen Ransom, Kelly Sill and Jade Stuart, yet fails to include all but three of the cast members actually listed in the screen credits.

To make matters more confusing, several video boxes insist character actor Keenan Wynn is a participant, even though he had the smarts to just say no.

I know that it probably doesn't deserve it, but this film is in desperate need of restoration and remastering, as all the available prints (most being from sell-through public domain video outfits) are jumpy, grainy, blurry, scratchy, underexposed, and generally unwatchable. Fitting, I know.

Ultimately, *Monster* lacks the charm of such waterlogged peers as *The Crater Lake Monster* (1977) and fares no better than Amando de Ossorio Rodríguez's sad, sad swansong *Serpiente de Mar* [The Sea Serpent] (1984).

Il Mostro di Venezia (1965)

THE MONSTER OF VENICE

IGondola Film [It] Walter Manley Enterprises [US] DIR: Dino Tavella PRO: Walter Manley and Christian Marvel SCR: Paolo Lombardo, Gian Battista Mussetto, Dino Tavella and Antonio Walter DOP: Mario Parapetti EXP: Walter Manley and Christian Marvel MUS: Marcello Gigante STR: Francesco Bagarrini, Alba Brotto, Maureen Lidgard Brown, Elmo Caruso, Roberto Contero, Viki del Castillo, Gaetano dell'Era, Luciano Gasper, Alcide Gazzotto, Antonio Grossi, Jack Judd, Luigi Martocci (aka Gin Mart), Carlo Russo, Anita Todesco, Paolo Vaccari, Maria Rosa Vizzina and Pietro Walter

AKA: *The Embalmer*

Het Monster van Venetie [The Monster of Venice]

Le Monstre de Venise [The Monster of Venice]

Approximately 83m; b&w; Unrated

DVD: The *Embalmer* [Alpha Video; 79(77)m; WS; NTSC RI] VHS: The Embalmer [Something Weird Video; 77m; FS; NTSC]

ADL: "Beauty After Beauty Dragged to a Sunken Crypt… Petrified Play Captives of the Embalmer"

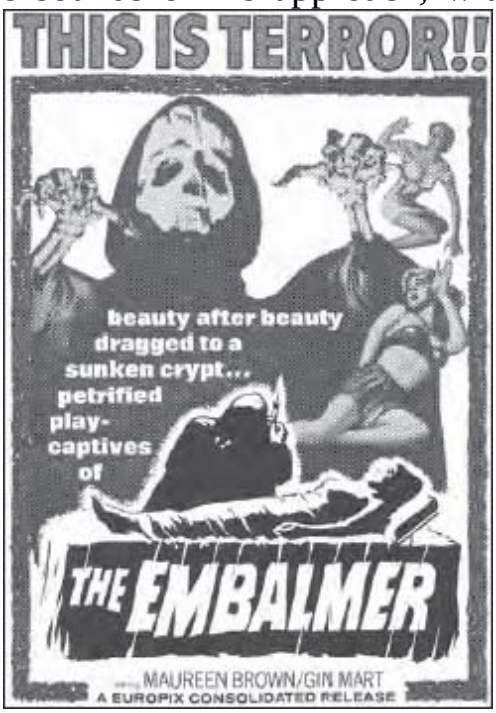
BY DAY, a cowled, skull faced killer ambles about his subterranean abode beneath the streets of Venice—that's Italy, to be precise, not California—pausing only to admire his bevy of preserved female corpses. By night, he dons a wetsuit and scuba gear and lurks the canals, waiting to jump out and abduct any unwary female prey that strays too close to the water's edge. Our resident sociopath has a penchant for eighteen year old girls, and—as luck would have it—a busload of barely legal students from Rome arrives, improving his odds dramatically. (Especially since he usually hangs out in the basement of the hotel in which they're all conveniently registered. Who would've thunk it?) Looking into the murders is Andreas, a reporter who

“looks as slick as a movie idol” (which, he insists, can be achieved with nothing more than a good razor at one’s disposal). He is convinced that “Venice is hiding a monster!” and that a ”maniacal sex fiend” is responsible, despite the fact that the bodies of the missing teenagers—all presumed drowned—have yet to surface, and thus no evidence of murder, much less sexual misconduct. (A very unsure police inspector can’t discount his theories, sticking to his guns that, “Maybe, I don’t know, *probably* that’s the story.”) Short on evidence, Andreas decides to take some time out of his busy hypothesizing to play tour guide to the gaggle of schoolgirls in order to make time with their chaperone (Maureen Lidgard Brown).

Here’s the equation, for those who feel the need to bone up on their cinematic arithmetic: *Phantom of the Opera* – the opera + a wetsuit and scuba gear + (object of obsession x however many young women the budget could afford) + implied necrophilia + trophy fetishism – good taste – common sense = *Il Mostro di Venezia.* Throw in a liberal dash of tedium, leave the whole mess to sit half baked for approximately ninety minutes, and you have a kitchen recipe as well as a mathematical formula.

Il Mostro di Venezia is not the most unpalatable Eurotrash burger one might find oneself taking a bite out of, but only those with a cast iron gut will be spared the imminent heartburn that follows. Although very reminiscent of the poverty row horrors of the forties inspired by the likes of pulp mystery writer Edgar Wallace, there may be enough sixties staples to keep things interesting for those who think b&w film is a bad thing (there’s even some peeping tom action to sleazen things up a bit). The film is slow early on, and the maniac’s exploits seem almost secondary to the snooze inducing drama, but the last reel boasts some nice atmosphere and at least one unexpected plot development that seems a little chancy for the time… compared to what we’ve come to expect from modern Hollywood cinema, anyway, if you discount the likes of *Se7en* (1995).

The film is a mixed bag throughout. Given, the story is wonderfully contrived, but the execution is often pedestrian, with the filmmakers fumbling behind the camera hoping they've got enough usable footage to make a feature length film. (Even the performers take their own sweet time, hoping to drag this sucker out to the prerequisite ninety minutes. They fail in their attempts, as does the editor who was probably none too pleased that there wasn't enough stock to make it a coherent eighty, even with his incessant recycling.) Either the outside scenes were shot in the dead of winter, or the cinematographer was suffering from low blood sugar during these excursions, if the jittery camerawork is any indication. The pounding score is far too Wagnerian to be effective, especially when it assaults the nearly deafened viewer during the stalking and abduction scenes, doing nothing to elicit tension. Of course, the filmmakers have done everything in their power to dispense with suspense altogether from the get-go, even going so far as to disclosing the identity of the forthcoming victim with an unnecessary freeze frame on them and their regrettable hair-don'ts. Or straining the viewer's suspension of disbelief by having the killer sneak up on an unsuspecting victim in the woods in the dead of night while wearing flippers. (I guess they couldn't hear the sounds of his approach, with the pounding score drowning it out and all.)



US pressbook advertisement for Il Mostro di Venezia (1966) Europix Consolidated

With lines like “My secret potion will penetrate every cell in your body!,” or”To ascertain the facts I’ve gathered I’ll have to review my findings,” the English voiceovers are guaranteed to tickle the unintentional funny bone of most *Trashfiend* readers. And if by chance the viewer actually laments such horrible dubbing, their opinion of the superiority of original language prints may be challenged by a musical number performed by a grating rock’n’roll troubadour who is allowed to wail in his native tongue.

How about: “I’ve heard of stereophonic sound, but this is ridiculous!” US promotional gag card teaser for Il Mostro di Venezia (1966) Europix Consolidated

Then there is our villainous Venetian who chews the scenery in the privacy of his underground hidey hole, describing his every intent and every action to the embalmed beauties, actresses trying desperately not to breathe or flinch as they stand in their cubicles wrapped only in a sheet. Presumably, his monologues are intended to keep the viewer abreast of the obvious… although its effect is to ultimately lull the unwitting spectator into a stupor. But, hey, he looks like he was modeled on the Crimson Ghost from *Cyclotrode X* (1946), so he gets points for *looking* cool even if he is a pompous, longwinded git.

The most unnerving aspect of this film is that, apparently, the killer wears his wetsuit under his clothes much of the time, which I would assume makes for very uncomfortable underwear. (The authorities would have no difficulty tracking him down, if they would just think to follow the damnable squeaking.) Hands down, the film's most frightening, utterly nerve wracking moment is when a frail elderly woman, looking as if she just stepped out of a Nazi concentration camp, decides to get funky on the dance floor with a club orchestra. I'm sure the question "Will she suffer an aneurysm—or at the very least throw out her hip—before the number is finished?," is on every last viewer's mind, and that the tension this scene creates is universally palpable. The second most horrifying scene involves a man being cheerfully swarmed by a horde of pigeons; luckily, we are spared the sight of the inevitable whitewashing.

Avella (1920–69) made only one other film, the forgotten war flick *Una Sporca Guerra* [One Dirty War] (1964). Most of the other people involved with *Il Mostro di Venezia* had similarly abbreviated careers, save for Anita Todesco, who appeared in a slew of non genre efforts, mostly action films. Co-producer Manley (1918–96) was at least partly to blame for the slew of low budget futura nouveau imports that deluged drive ins during the sixties; given that *The Green Slime* was one of them, we'll forgive him such transgressions.

Belgian window card for Il Mostro di Venezia (1965) Cosmopolis Films

Originally released in the US alongside Michael Reeves' *La Sorella di Satana* (1966) aka *The She-Beast*, this film was later re-issued as the bottom rung of a horror marathon triple bill below Ted V Mikels' *The Corpse Grinders* (1971) and the HG Lewis inspired gore-omedy *The Undertaker and his Pals* (1967) before fading into obscurity for almost thirty years.

The Night Caller (1965)

Armitage Films Ltd [UK] New Art Productions Inc. [UK] DIR: John Gilling PRO: Ronald Liles and John J Phillips SCR: Jim O'Connolly NOV: The Night Callers by Frank Crisp [John Long; 1960; UK HC edition] The Night Callers by Frank Crisp [Panther Books; 1963; UK PB edition] DOP: Stephen Dade EXP: John Phillips MUS: Johnny Gregory STR: Ballard Berkeley, Alfred Burke, John Carson, Robert Crewdson, Maurice Denham, Barbara French, Tom Gill, Romo Gorrara, David Gregory, Patricia Haines, Vincent Harding, Douglas Livingstone, Geoffrey Lumsden, Stanley Meadows, Warren Mitchell, Aubrey Morris, John Saxon, John Sherlock, Marianne Stone, Anthony Wager and Jack Watson

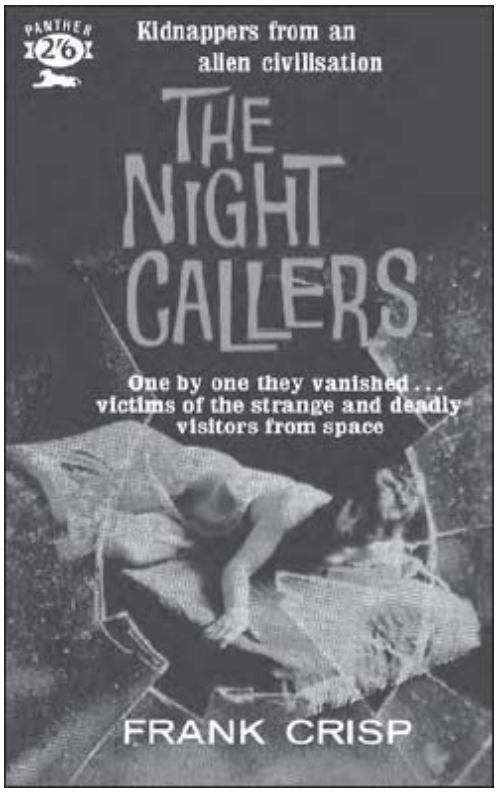
AKA: *Blood Beast from Outer Space*

The Night Caller from Outer Space

Approximately 84m; b&w; Unrated DVD: The *Night Caller from Outer Space* [Image Entertainment; 84m; WS; NTSC R1] VHS: The *Night Caller from Outer Space* [Image Entertainment; 84m; WS; NTSC] ADL: "Space Creatures Snatch Girls to Mysterious Planet"

TWO SCIENTISTS, Dr Morley (Maurice Denham) and his protégée Jack Costain (John Saxon), rush after a meteorite that displays enigmatic qualities, only to find that the military is already combing the English countryside for it. Expecting to find something rather enormous, they instead discover that the source of the commotion is a soccer sized rock seemingly

piloted to Earth via remote control. They waste no time in hauling it to Falsley Park—a government run radio and electronic research facility—for a battery of tests, and discover it to be a hollow sphere composed of selenium and housing a vacuum. Whereas the brass is convinced that they have appropriated a rogue Commie satellite, the eggheads are more than a little certain that it is instead extraterrestrial in origin. After the scientist's secretary is accosted in the office after hours by a clawed man-like creature that inexplicably appears in the sealed storage room in which the sphere has been sequestered, the white coats come to the conclusion that it is actually a matter transreceiver, capable of teleporting its creators to Earth from Jupiter's moon, Ganymede.


PANTHER
26
Kidnappers from an alien civilisation
THE NIGHT CALLERS
One by one they vanished . . . victims of the strange and deadly visitors from space
FRANK CRISP

UK paperback novelization for The Night Caller (1963) Panther Books

One such bug-eyed monster makes the jump a second time, then fights its way off the base. Having successfully carjacked its own set of wheels, the uninvited guest then proceeds to lure and ultimately abduct local birds through a wanted advert in *Bikini Girl* magazine, its intentions unknown but

probably not in the least honorable. (With twenty one girls spirited away in less than three weeks, one has to assume he's stocking up for the long haul.) Without a doubt, *The Night Caller's* greatest strength lies in its sharp scriptwriting. First, most of the film is populated by realistic and/ or interestingly offbeat characters; whereas the leads usually fall into the first category; others— like the sleazy owner of a used bookstore who is unknowingly in cahoots with the spooky space invader—would not be out of place in an early Argento film. To augment the characters is some unexpected but very welcome dry humor; a scene with the Major (John Carson) trying futilely to explain the research team's scientific findings to his superior over the phone is uproarious, and another with authorities interviewing the distraught parents of a missing girl is also not without its chuckles. Second, *The Night Caller* offers a fairly realistic portrayal of science and its inner workings. Even when the details are flawed or the concepts farfetched, the scientists act like scientists and their explanations sound plausible. Of course, none of this would have meant a damn if the performers had not been up to the task, and it should surprise no one that the movie was based—fairly faithfully, by most accounts—on a novel by Frank Crisp, a prolific British writer who specialized in sea adventures.

The film also plays against formulaic types, especially in the casting of a somewhat manly secretarial love interest, and a dour faced superintendent working the case. The Major who works as the go-between for the military and the scientific researchers also avoids the clichés that usually accompany such a character. Throw in an unexpected dissolution for one of the major players, topped off with a rather downbeat finale, and you have a film that proves engaging throughout because it avoids the paint by numbers trappings.

The realization of the film is fairly straightforward, proving itself competent while avoiding any artistic flourishes. The special effects are modest (typical of English sci fi fare at the time), which in many ways keeps the fantastic subject matter— dare I say it—refreshingly down to earth. Aside from a clawed hand, the monster is never shown until the finale, which proves to be both a boon and a bane. Although to say that the unveiling is a monumental letdown, it is surprisingly atypical of the aliens usually featured in sci fi horror fare from this era, so it would be unfair for the discriminate viewer to hold too much of a grudge.

HARRIS ASSOCIATES, INC. presents
BLOOD BEAST FROM OUTER SPACE
starring JOHN SAXON
MAURICE DENHAM
PATRICIA HAINES
and Guest Stars John Carson • Jack Watson

Okay, any comments about this actress just asking to be abducted by aliens is way out of line. Really. US lobby card for The Night Caller (1965) World Entertainment

Reportedly, *The Night Caller* was originally released with the opening credits accompanied by a lively Hammond organ instrumental piece entitled Image, written and/or performed by Joe Glenn, Larry Greene and Bob Sande. Somewhere along the line (probably when it was released Stateside two years later), someone decided that the film needed its own title track, so the Telstar inspired theme was scrapped and replaced with a weak lounge track composed by Albert Hague, boasting the vocal styling of Mark Richardson. (The theme song to *The Green Slime*, this isn't. If the people in the film really wanted our titular extraterrestrial to go home, all they had to do was throw this on the turntable for a few spins.) The original opening number still appears in the film, but it is thanklessly relegated to a spat of transitional stock footage about midway into it. Whether either of these tracks has ever been released on vinyl, I can't say… and not for my lack of trying to find them, I assure you.

Following this, actor John Saxon (1935–) appeared in numerous horror films, many from name directors, including but not limited to Curtis Harrington's *Queen of Blood* (1966), Bob Clark's *Black Christmas* (1974), Antonio Margheriti's *Apocalisse Domani* [Apocalypse Tomorrow] (1981), Dario Argento's *Tenebrae* (1982) and Wes Craven's *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984). Scene stealer John Carson (1927–) appeared in numerous Hammer outings, as well as the British made for television series *Thriller* (1973–76) and *Hammer's House of Horror* (1980). Actor Ballard Berkeley (1904–88) is fondly remembered by most Anglophiles for his portrayal of the Major on BBC TV's *Fawlty Towers* (1975–79).

Director Gilling (1912–85) also brought us *The Flesh and the Fiends* (1959) as well as the great Hammer double bill of *The Plague of the Zombies* and *The Reptile* (both 1966). He closed his twenty seven year career as a filmmaker with the obscure shocker *La Cruz del Diablo* [The Cross of the Devil] (1975), which he did as a favor to Spanish horror icon Paul Naschy (né Jacinto Molina Alvarez). Screenwriter O'Connolly later helmed such memorable genre efforts as *The Valley of Gwangi* (1969) and *Tower of Evil* (1972), both of which boasted scripts that elevated the sensational material above similarly orchestrated fare.

NIGHT FRIGHT (1967)

Production company unknown [US] DIR: James A Sullivan PRO: Wallace P Clyce Jr. SCR: Russell Marker DOP: Robert C Jessup SFX: Jack Dale Bennett MUS: Christopher Trussell and The Wildcats STR: John Agar, Ralph Baker Jr, Dorothy Davis, Darlene Drew, Carol Gilley, Lewis Helm, Bill Holly, Frank Jolly, Bryan Lord, Nancy Mann, Russell Marker, Gary McLain, Janiz Menshew, Rod Paxton, Toni Pearce, Olivia Pinion, Roger Ready, Christi Simmons, Bill Thurman, Brenda Venus, Ronnie Weaver and Jeanie Wilson

AKA: *E.T.n. The Extra Terrestrial Nastie*

Fright Night

Approximately 75m; Color; Unrated

DVD: *Night Fright* [Alpha Video; 66(75)m; FS; NTSC R1] [CatCom Home Video; 75m; FS; NTSC R0; Double billed with *They Came from Beyond Space]*

ADL: “A Feeding Frenzy from Outer Space!”

A COUPLE of post pimpled high schoolers decide to do their necking at Satan’s Hollow because the teen hangout by the lake is as “busy as a meat market selling ten-cent steaks”. No sooner do the youth hear an exuberant radio announcement about a shooting star than they find themselves “chewed up real bad” by a monster off screen. Another couple of unwary teens barely sidestep the carnage, and in steps crusty Sheriff Clint Crawford (John Agar) to warn precocious party minded teens and spend the rest of his waking hours wandering the woods looking for clues. Before any of the players can perform some simple math, in steps pipe puffing biologist Professor Alan Clayton (played by Roger Ready… yes, Roger Ready) who is apparently taking some time off from his top secret work at Cape Kennedy to grace the locals with his taciturn presence. A few more people fall in step for the mind numbing events, and pretty soon the viewer realizes they’ve stepped in something as well.

This regional effort, made by regulars from hackmeister Larry Buchanan’s troupe, seems to be the missing link between fifties aliens-on-the-loose flicks and seventies Bigfoot drive-in fodder. A tad more innovative than *Robot Monster* (1953), our pissy extraterrestrial is a guy in a mohair gorilla suit wearing football pads and what looks to be a Klingon mask made by a reasonably talented third grader. Of course, we don’t get a good look at our frosted fuzzy friend until well past the halfway point; although this would have been recommended in a better film, the beastie’s camera shyness is lamented in *Night Fright.*

The scenes of people stumbling through acres of dead trees looking for anything remotely interesting is undoubtedly more tiring for the viewer than it ever was for the actors involved (heck, at least they got *paid* for their aimless pursuit). The only things more tedious than the seemingly endless scenes of cast members wandering about are the poorly lit chases that eventually ensue; as boring as the mind numbing prattle is that dominates the film, at least it’s a reminder that we’re watching a film. The script does offer a few inspired moments, mostly in the way of intentional humor, but the

film’s most hilarious sequence is the finale. I honestly don’t know if the filmmakers were trying to pull a fast one on the audience with their creative’ defeat of the monster, but the end result would not have been out of place in a Monty Python skit.

I almost feel sorry for the teens in this picture, and in general for those Texans who struggled with puberty during the sixties; it must have been traumatic for the lot of them. (I never thought I’d hear so many “groovy“’s and “dig it“’s used in the same sentences as “boondocks” and “cow eyes”, and delivered with southern fried accents to boot.) Those poor kids have no beach on which to while away their beer fueled weekends, no surfboards on which to perform their death defying rites of adulthood, and no one to tell them just how silly they look strutting and gyrating in the woods after dark. (The mating rituals of rural teens have never been as disturbing as what this film depicts. Could this be the ‘Night Fright’ to which the title refers?) Worse yet, the local radio station only plays instrumentals by The Wildcats, a cut rate Ventures clone that dominate the top forty. (Can you say “payola?”) Again, my heart goes out to each and every one of them.

Bouffants (hey, it’s Texas, so the kids are a few years behind the times, so what). Familiar but unable to be placed stock music (one atonal piano number brings to mind the 1975 trash classic *Criminally Insane).* Underexposed day for night footage (which is the purpose of day for night footage, I know, but it would be nice to actually see what’s going on. Otherwise, why not just film it in the dead of night?). And a cast of characters who like to say “mélange” at each and every given opportunity (hey, it makes *me* sound cultured, so why not them?).

DVD box art for Night Fright (2003) Alpha Video Distributors, Inc. #4286-D

Star Agar (1921–2002)—a particularly competent B-actor who was no stranger to extraterrestrial menaces—maintains as much dignity as one could hope for under such mitigating circumstances. In 1955, Agar appeared in his first genre pictures with *Revenge of the Creature* and *Tarantula*, fought *The Mole People* a year later in 1956, then worked his way down the cinematic ladder with *Daughter of Dr Jekyll* and *The Brain from Planet Arous,* both 1957. He continued as a leading man in low rent sci fi and action films throughout the sixties, and hit bottom when he started slumming with Larry Buchanan. In 1972 *Famous Monsters of Filmland* jumped the gun and pronounced him dead, although he didn't succumb to emphysema until thirty years later. He was offered the occasional walk through in films until his death, and became a regular face at conventions signing autographs for pathetic retro geeks like myself.

Cinematographer Jessup should sound familiar to anyone who passes time reading film credits: after working on a handful of Buchanan efforts, he shot a couple of supernatural flicks—*Sugar Hill* (1974) and *Race with the Devil* (1975)—but spent most of the seventies and eighties focusing on non

horror drive-in and made for television fare. After supplying the monsters for most of Buchanan's shoestring creature features, special effects artist Bennett contributed to a couple of shockers—*Don't Look in the Basement* (1973) and *Twisted Brain* (1974)—before moving to television as well. Screenwriter Marker previously helmed two obscure genre efforts, *The Yesterday Machine* (1963) and *The Demon from Devil's Lake* (1964). Having discovered a timely review of the latter in the *New York Times*, the plot synopsis for *The Demon from Devil's Lake* mirrors that *of Night Fright*, which would account for the belief that *Night Fright* is simply a retitle of the 1964 film. This review, however, credits Marker as director, producer, and screenwriter, it stars an unknown by the name of Dave Heath, and is said to have a running time of eighty one minutes. If correct, *The Demon from Devil's Lake* was probably an earlier attempt at the same material but remains currently lost, having had a very limited, no doubt regional release.

To my knowledge, this is the only directorial effort on the part of Sullivan, who started out as an assistant director on the cult television series *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* in 1964 then went on to perform various duties—cinematographer and production manager among them—on a handful of low budget films, primarily those by—you guessed right—Larry Buchanan. (He was also the editor on *Manos, the Hands of Fate* (1966), but I'm sure that's something even *he* would want stricken from his resume.) *Night Fright* is definitely a late night creature feature—the later you watch it, the better it is.

La Notte Che Evelyn Uscì Dalla Tomba (1971)

THE NIGHT EVELYN CAME OUT OF THE GRAVE

> Phoenix Cinematografica [Italy] DIR: Emilio Paolo Miraglia SCR: Massimo Felisatto, Emilio Paolo Miraglia and Fabio Pittorru-Floresta DOP: Gastone di Giovanni MUS: Bruno Nicolai SND: La Notte Che Evelyn Uscì dalla Tomba [Digitmovies; 69m; CD] STR: Ettore Bevilacqua, Enrica Bianchi Colombatto (aka Erika Blanc), Joan C Davis, Antonio de Teffè (aka Anthony Steffen), Roberto Maldera, Marina Malfatti, Brizio Montinaro, Rod Murdock, Paola Natale, Umberto Raho, Giacomo Rossi-Stuart and Maria Teresa Tofano
>
> AKA: *L'Appel de la Chair* [The Call of the Flesh]

Die Grotte der Lebenden Leichen [The Grotto of the Living Corpses]

Die Grotte der Vergessenen Leichen [The Grotto of the Forgotten Corpses]

Holocauste pour une Vierge [Holocaust for a Virgin]

The Night she Rose from the Tomb

La Noche Que Evelyn Salio de la Tumba [The Night Evelyn Rose from the Tomb]

Sweet to be Kissed, Hard to Kill

Approximately 103m; Color; Rated R

DVD: *Die Grotte der Vergessenen Leichen* [X-Rated Kult DVD; 98m; WS; German Subtitles; PAL R2] Ifce *Night Evelyn Came Out of the Grave*

[Alpha Video; 96m; FS; NTSC R1] [Blood Bath Films; RTU; WS; NTSC R1]

VHS: The *Night Evelyn Came Out of a Grave* [VCI Home Video; 84(82)m; FS; NTSC] [Something Weird Video; 101(98)m; WS; NTSC]

ADL: “The Worms are Waiting!”

Mexican lobby card for La Notte Che Evelyn UscÌ dalla Tomba (1971)
Phoenix Cinematografica

AFTER BEING released ‘rehabilitated’ from the Dr Richard Timberlane Psychiatric Clinic, Lord Alan Cunningham (Antonio de Teffè), a playboy with a weakness for redheads, picks up a pro and lures her to his family castle with the promise of £500. (Most of his ancestral home is in ruins save for a restored wing and well equipped torture chamber just off his bedroom. Convenient, that.) After stripping, she is asked to don a pair of tall black leather boots, then is flogged and almost branded. In a fit of madness, Alan mistakes his expensive guest for his dead wife Evelyn—who died during childbirth—then stabs the trollop for her troubles. (Courtesy of a series of slow motion flashbacks showing Evelyn running through the garden au naturale into the arms of her awaiting lover—not Alan—we discover that her adulterous nature was at least partly responsible for Alan winding up in the bughouse.) Tired of being blackmailed by a nosey ground-skeeper—his late wife’s brother—Alan becomes convinced his attacks will only cease if he contacts his deceased wife through a local medium, against his doctor’s better judgment. His friends and family show up for the séance—including

Evelyn’s stubborn spirit, after a bit of coaxing— but the attacks persist, next with a stripper whose act includes being carried onstage in a coffin. Alan’s doctor convinces him getting remarried would be the best thing for his condition, and he complies after falling head over heels for a mysterious woman he meets at his swinging cousins lavish party. Expecting no less, his new bride to be is also a redhead, and after some hurried nuptials they both begin seeing Evelyns ghost.

THE WORMS ARE WAITING!
"The Night Evelyn Came Out of the Grave"
Starring ANTHONY STEFFEN MARINA MALFATTI Also Starring ERICA BLANC Directed By EMILIO P. MIRAGLIA
A PHASE ONE FILMS, INC. RELEASE TECHNICOLOR® TECHNISCOPE®
R

US lobby card for La Notte Che Evelyn Uscì dalla Tomba (1971) Phase One Films, Inc.

Those expecting a supernatural thriller, implied by the original ad campaign, will be sorely disappointed. Those hoping for schizophrenic Eurotrash heavy on the sleaze and sadism may still be disappointed, but at least they’ll be prepared. *La Notte Che Evelyn UscÌ dalla Tomba* begins its misbegotten life as a sexy psycho killer flick, every scene leading up to the punishment and inevitable death of the antihÉro’s surrogate wives, brandishing the sadomasochistic imagery in a trite fashion. Midway, the film

shifts gears, almost dispensing with this formula entirely in favor of rusty giallo trappings fueled by an even more tired inheritance scheme, a lynchpin that becomes apparent very early on. Somehow, despite all its failings, this contrived thriller actually succeeds at being engaging. At the very least, it should hold the interest of those desperate filmgoers who can't get enough fuzzed out guitars and sideburns.

The production values as well as the presentation of the material is rarely exceptional, although some occasionally inspired camerawork (motorized wheelchair-cam, and a shot looking through a perforated painting as a woman hacks at it with a knife) make up for any nauseating hand-held photography or unnecessary zooms. The script is sloppy, considering it was cooked up by three screenwriters who had worked with one another prior to this outing. One particularly silly scene has the police discovering the corpse of a wheel-chair bound woman in a locked cage, her ride parked just outside, and coming to the conclusion that it *must* have been an accident. This is after they discover the groundskeeper dead, having been bitten by a venomous snake and then buried alive. I guess this is to counterbalance the many films in which suspicions are aroused without the slightest shred of evidence or motive.

Being early seventies Eurotrash, the film is not without its gratuity, which is part of the reason *La Notte Che Evelyn Uscì dalla Tomba* is so gosh darn watchable. Damn near every woman who wanders onto the set doffs her clothes at some point. (Unfortunately, even the longest print available—which clocks in at roughly ninety eight minutes—is shorn of some of the skin.) Most of the violence is rather tame, save for a scene where one victims body is dragged into a cage of starved foxes and promptly stripped and eviscerated, confirming that the effects budget was not so destitute they couldn't afford a bucket of pig gut. One of the murders, though, which has one nosey victim being beaten to death with a rock, is unintentionally comic, thanks to her reaction to the attack and the inappropriate sound effects that accompany the bludgeoning.

Suspense is kept to a bare minimum, and the shocks are practically nonexistent; the scene in which the titular wraith is finally seen to actually rise from her tomb probably wouldn't leave an impression on anyone over the age of seven. The only facet of the film that could truly be considered nightmarish is that it features a cadre of maids in service to the playboy who

—because of his pathological hair fetish—are forced to wear Little Orphan Annie wigs when on duty. Trust me, you'll shudder too at the sight.

After being featured in a godforsaken number of spaghetti westerns, de Teffè (1932–) broadened his exploitation horizons and appeared in such genre efforts as the Barbara Steele vehicle *Un Angelo per Satana* [An Angel for Satan] (1966), *Sette Scialli di Seta Gialla* [Seven Shawls of Yellow Silk] (1972) and *Femmine Infernali* [Women's Inferno] (1979). Enrica Bianchi Colombatto (1942–) is still keeping busy as an actress, and has such memorable trash horror films to her credit as *La Plus Longue Nuit du Diable* [The Longest Night of the Devil] (1971) aka *The Devil's Nightmare, Hexen Geschändet und zu Tode Gequält* [Witches Raped and Tortured to Death] (1972) aka *Mark of the Devil, Part II* and the Paul Naschy vehicle *Una Libéluna para Cada Muerto* [A Dragonfly for Each Corpse] (1974). Memorable by my standards, anyway.

Director Miraglia (1924–) made only a handful of films between 1967 and 1972, his swansong being *La Dama Rossa Uccide Sette Volte* [The Red Queen Kills Seven Times] (1972), a giallo notable for featuring a young Sybil Danning.

When it comes down to it, *La Notte Che Evelyn Uscì datta Tomba* is a guilty pleasure that, from all reports, many others feel guilt-ridden for liking as well.

Il Plenilunio Delle Virgini (1973)

THE FULL MOON OF THE VIRGINS

> Virginia Cinemtografica [It] DIR: Luigi Batzella (aka Paolo Solvay, aka Paul Solvay) SCR: Alan M Harris and Massimo Pupillo (aka Ralph Zucker) DOP: Aristide Massaccesi (aka Michael Holloway) EXP: Massimo Pupillo (aka Ralph Zucker) MUS: Vasili Kojucharov STR: Esmerelda Barros, Mark Damon, Girogio Dolfin (aka George Dolfin), Gengher Gatti (aka Alexander Getty), Rosalba Neri (aka Sara Bay), Stefano Oppedisano (aka Stephen Hopper), Xiro Papas (aka Ciro Papas), Sergio Pislar and Enza Sbordone (aka Francesca Romana Davila)
>
> AKA: *The Devil's Wedding Night*

De Maagden van de Volle Maan [The Virgins of the Full Moon] *Pleine Lune* [Full Moon] *Vierges de la Pleine Lune* [Virgins of the Full Moon]

Les Vierges Maudites De Dracula [The Cursed Virgins of Dracula]

"Lusty, lurid and perverse"
Linda Gross, L.A. Times
SATAN IS COMING!
DEVIL'S WEDDING NIGHT
DARK DESIRES UNLEASH THE LEGIONS OF LUCIFER!
Starring
MARK DAMON • ROSALBA NERI
VHS
Produced by RALPH ZUCKER
Directed by PAUL SOLVAY
Screenplay by PAUL BRUNT and FRANK SIMPSON
THIS PROGRAM IS AVAILABLE EXCLUSIVELY ON
WIZARD VIDEO
MANUFACTURED AND DISTRIBUTED EXCLUSIVELY IN THE U.S.A. BY F.H.E. INC.

VHS box art for Il Plenilunio delle Virgin (circa 1984) Wizard Video #038

Approximately 84m; Color; Rated R

VHS: *The Devil's Wedding Night* [VCI; 85(84)m; FS; NTSC] [Wizard Video; 85(84)m; FS; NTSC] *Pleine Lune* [Dynasty Films; RTU; FS; SECAM] *Les Vierges Maudites De Dracula* [Space Video; RTU; FS; SECAM]

ADL:“Dark Desires Unleash the Legions of Lucifer!”

KARL SCHILLER (Mark Damon), a young archeologist, discovers proof of the existence of the mythical Ring of the Nibelungen, whose stone was extricated from an ancient meteorite in the Carpathian Mountains. (“When moonlight strikes its surface, weird, eerie and uncanny phenomenon takes place,” his source insists.) He tracks down its current whereabouts to Transylvania (“vampire country”), but before he can be on his way, his libertine twin Franz borrows his studious brother’s magical amulet and heads east to search out the ring on his lonesome. After seducing the innkeeper’s daughter, Franz makes his way to Castle Dracula, having left his only safeguard at the local watering hole. Only a day behind his opportunistic sibling, Karl arrives at the castle just in time for the ‘Night of the Virgin Moon,’ an event that takes place every fifty years where five village virgins are beckoned to the crumbling stronghold, never to be heard from again.

Il Plenilunio delle Virgini is another ham fisted stab at sexing up Bram Stoker’s popular formula, but—being low rent gothicism wallowing in the excesses of seventies trash horror—it cannot compare to even the worst of Hammer’s Dracula inspired period pieces. The staples are present and accounted for: an old castle backdrop, creaking doors, glue-on mutton chops, and—last but not least—vampyros lesbos, seventies style. And, yes, there’s even the occasional sound of a fuzzed out guitar thrown in to distract the viewer from a horde of anachronisms fostered by the obvious budgetary constraints. The opening credits set the stage for this Eurotrash offering, proffering scenes of an all-female orgy spliced with its participants having their throats slit as seen through a blood red filter, but, alas, the film is rarely able to live up to such promising foreplay. *Il Plenilunio delle Virgini* displays more breasts than bite, as this opening scene is far more gratuitous than anything found in the remaining eighty plus minutes. The gore consists of some gushing stab wounds, a handful of dry decaps, and a bloody dismemberment, but these are all saved for the end of the last reel… far too late to rouse the unwary viewers from their necessitated slumber.

What separates this film from its peers are not its good points, but its faults and occasional chutzpah. An otherwise tedious and uneventful sex scene has the woman transforming into a giant bat mid coitus. Our hero is later accosted by a bald, hunchbacked vampire whose enormous fangs are only eclipsed by his shaggy eyebrows. The stone in Countess Dracula’s ring

—as ungainly and gaudy as one might expect from such a dime store deus ex machina—looks suspiciously like a partially flattened cherry tomato in a cracker jack fitting. The viewers' sympathies are not directed towards the unwilling maidens, or the valiant heroes, but the poor horses that have apparently galloped at full speed from London to the Carpathian Mountains without so much as a breather. Furthermore, references to Edgar Allan Poe and Richard Wagner's operas are conflicting, and the devil god Pazuzu is referred to by a scholar as Egyptian, not Abyssinian or Babylonian as anyone with a basic grasp of mythology or the occult would have known, even in the mid 1800s. (Of course, modern filmgoers know this because of *The Exorcist,* but that's neither here nor there.) Unfortunately, even reveling in the film's so bad it's good qualities do nothing to make the film any less yawn inspiring.

Director Luigi Batzella was also responsible for such gratuitous shockers as *Nuda per Satana* [Nude for Satan] (1974) and the Nazi camp grungefest *La Bestia in Calore* [The Beast in Heat] (1977) aka SS *Hell Camp*. Scriptwriter Massimo Pupillo (1929–82) made his own contributions as a genre director with the similarly lurid (but more professionally made) *Il Boia Scarlatto* [The Scarlet Hangman] (1965) aka *Bloody Pit of Horror* and 5 *Tombe per un Medium* [Five Tombs for a Medium] (1966) aka *Terror-Creatures from the Grave*. And of course, cinematographer Aristide Massaccesi (1936–99), the only person to employ almost as many pseudonyms as the infamous Jesse Franco, later went on to direct far more interesting exploitation horror films, such as *Buio Omega* [Blue Holocaust] (1979) aka *Buried Alive and Anthropophagous the Beast* [Man-Eater] (1980) aka *The Grim Reaper.*

According to the American pressbook distributed by Dimension Pictures, the theatrical release of this film boasted a recitation of Edgar Allan Poe's poem Annabel Lee as performed by Vincent Price, but apparently it was removed for the later video releases. A possible copyright infringement? Who knows.

SEDDOK, L'EREDE DI SATANA (1960)

SEDDOK, THE HEIR OF SATAN

Leone Film [Fr/It] DIR: Mario Bava (aka Mario Fava) and Anton Giulio Majano (aka Richard McNamara) PRO: Mario Bava (aka Mario Fava) SCR: Alberto Bevilacqua, Gino de Santis, Anton Giulio Majano and Piero Monviso DOP: Aldo Giordani SFX: Ugo Amadoro MUS: Armando Trovajoli STR: Roberto Bertea, Sergio Fantoni, Rina Franchetti, Ivo Garrani, Susanne Loret, Alberto Lupo, Glamor Mora, Franca Parisi, Giovanna Piaz (aka Gianna Piaz) and Andrea Scotti

AKA: *Atom Age Vampire*

Le Monstre au Masque [The Monster with a Mask]

Seddok der Würger mit den Teufelskrallen

[Seddok the Strangler with the Devil Claws] *Seddok, El Heredero del Diablo* [Seddok, the Heir of the Devil] *Seddok, Son of Satan*

Approximately 105m; b&w; Unrated

US lobby card for Seddok, l'Erede di Satana (1963) Topaz Film Corporation

DVD: *Atom Age Vampire* [Alpha Video; 87(69)m; FS; NTSC R1] [Madacy Entertainment; 87m; FS; NTSC R1; Double feature with *Bloodlust]*

VHS: *Atom Age Vampire* [Acme Video; 87m; FS; NTSC] [Madacy Entertainment; 87m; FS; NTSC; Double feature with *Bloodlust]* [Rhino Video; 87m; FS; NTSC]

ADL: "Before Your Very Eyes the Terrifying Transformation of Man into Monster!"

MISS JEANETTE MORENEAU (Susanne Loret) is dumped by her main squeeze because she won't give up her job as an actress (or stripper, I'm not sure which. Things can get hazy in the poor translations of non English speaking imports). Distraught, she does a nosedive off a cliff in her convertible and survives, albeit "horribly" scarred. Although her disfigurement looks as if it could be easily remedied by some rudimentary

plastic surgery, she is pronounced a hopeless case by the medical community at large and left to wallow in her malaise, hiding her scars with a peek-a-boo hairdo à la Veronica Lake. A scientist, Professor Alberto Levin (Alberto Lupo), offers his services, looking for a guinea pig on which to test Derma-28, a "miraculous therapy" that uses radiation to stimulate new tissue growth. During the treatment, he becomes obsessed with the retired performer, going so far as to knock off his jealous female assistant, Monique (Franca Parisi).

He cures his newfound love interest, but the process soon reverses itself; in order to test it more thoroughly, he injects himself and—in true Jekyll & Hyde fashion—turns into a crusty faced beastie who begins roaming the streets, attacking women and stealing the glands needed to perfect his formula. (Only by immersing himself in irradiated gas can he return to his former self.) In a reversal of Poe's "The Murders in the Rue Morgue,' an escaped gorilla is blamed for the murders. (Why an ape would remove its victims' glands with a scalpel is anyone's guess.) I haven't seen the original European version of this film (which runs almost twenty minutes longer than the American cut), but I have a gut feeling the English language print has been heavily rewritten and re-edited to compensate for the missing footage. (The fact it also lists an American director who was not originally involved in the project may have clued me in as well.) Aside from the addition of the Robert Louis Stevenson styled antics, *Seddok, l'Erede di Satana* is standard post *Les Yeux sans Visage* fare. Lacking the flair of Georges Franju's 1959 classic, this knock-off replaces poetry with prurience, filling the gaps with inexplicable monster transformations and titillating panty shots.

Scenery chewing abounds, exaggerated by the poor dubbing. The first reel plays like an info-mercial for the nonexistent Derma-28, steeped in pseudoscientific claptrap that could only be conceived by a hack comic book writer. The lumpy makeup prosthetics sported by our resident mad scientist are reminiscent of those worn by his peer in the pleasantly hackneyed *Monster on the Campus* (1958). During his first transformation, the filmmakers opted for awkward stop motion photography to facilitate the change, but reverted to the standard dissolve metamorphosis later on.

Screenwriter Bevilacqua (1934–) later worked with Bava on two of his more 'colorful' efforts, *I Tre Volti della Paura* [The Three Faces of Fear] (1963) aka *Black Sabbath,* and *Terrore nello Spazio* [Terror in Space] (1965)

aka *Planet of the Vampires.* His final contribution to the genre was narrating the shockumentary *Angeli Bianchi… Angeli Neri* [White Angel… Black Angel] (1970) aka *Witchcraft ’70*, which boasts a rare screen appearance by Anton LaVey, founder of the Church of Satan. Bevilacqua later became a noted novelist, translating his own books to the screen.

French pressbook advertisement for Seddok, l’Erede di Satana (1960) Leone Film

This was the only horror film helmed by prolific director/screenwriter Majano (1909–94) although he was responsible for the English dubbing on *Il Mulino delle Donne di Pietra* [The Mill of the Stone Women] (1960). Bava was only credited as producer, but actually functioned as a co-director on this film as well. We can probably assume he was responsible for the few interestingly staged scenes, but even then his contributions seem moot. Hindered by its insistence on playing everything by the book, *Seddok, l’Erede di Satana* amounts to little more than dime store monster fare. Unfortunately for most trashfiends, the film offers surprisingly little in the way of so bad it’s good entertainment.

SEDDOK
•EL HEREDERO DEL DIABLO•
ALBERTO LUPO · SUSANNE LORET · SERGIO FANTONI · FRANCA PARISI · ANDREA SCOTTI
RINA FRANCHETTI · ROBERTO BERTEA con IVO GARRANI
Dirigida por ANTONI GIULIO MAJANO · Producida por IPPOLITO MELLINO · Dist. por COLUMBIA PICTURES

Mexican lobby card for Seddok, l'Erede di Satana (1963) Columbia Pictures

El Sonido Prehistórico (1964)

THE PREHISTORIC SOUND

Zurbano Films, S.A. [Spain] DIR: Jose Antonio Nieves Conde PRO: Gregorio Sacristán de Hoyas (aka Gregorio Sacristan) SCR: Sam X Abarbanel, Jose Antonio Nieves Conde, Gregorio Sacristán de Hoyas (aka Gregorio Sacristan) and Gregg Tallas DOP: Manuel Berenguer SFX: Manuel Baquero MUS: Luis de Pablo STR: José Bódalo, Antonio Casas, Arturo Fernández, Lola Gaos, Soledad Miranda, James Philbrook, Francisco Piquer and Ingrid Pitt

AKA: *Prigionieri dell'Orrore* [Prisoners of Horror]

El Sonido de la Muerte [The Sound of Death]

Sound of Horror

Approximately 91m; b&w; Unrated

DVD: *Sound of Horror* [Alpha Video; 90m; FS; NTSC R1]

A SMALL GROUP of war veterans who acquired pieces of a map giving the location of Grecian artifacts stolen during WWII band together in order to share the wealth; while looking for their booty in a cave avoided by the superstitious locals, they inadvertently unearth the mummified remains of a beautifully preserved Neanderthal and a nest of petrified eggs. One of the latter hatches into an invisible blob like creature that wastes little time in brunching on an impatient treasure hunter, who is later found mauled to death and completely drained of blood. It's thirst unquenched, the prehistoric monstrosity chases the lot of them to an isolated house in which they are staying, its presence given away only by its screams. (Well, that, and the low budget havoc it leaves in its frenzied wake.) This movie exploits one of my favorite ideas conceived by frugal horror filmmakers: if you can't afford the special effects that come with having a monster as the star, simply make it invisible! *Orloff y el Hombre Invisible* [Orloff and the Invisible Man] (1970) dispensed with most of the film's special effects budget by employing this oh-so-clever legerdemain, as have others on occasion. Surprisingly, this cheat as it is applied to *El Sonido Prehistórico* actually contributes to the

suspense, and benefits it in other areas by taking the sober less is more credo of older horror movies to an almost ludicrous extreme. (The importance of the latter becomes apparent when we finally get to see the bargain basement beastie in silhouette, as it looks like something that could be found in a lesser *kaijû eiga* effort.) Of course, there is never an explanation as to *why* our resident carnivore is invisible to the naked eye.

El Sonido Prehistórico is one of the few monster movies to be produced in Spain prior to their horror 'renaissance,' kick started three years later with the first entry in Paul Naschy's werewolf cycle *La Marca del Hombre Lobo* [The Mark of the Wolf-man] (1968) and Amando de Ossorio Rodríguez's tongue in cheek *Malenka, la Sobrina del Vampiro* [Malenka, the Niece of the Vampire] (1968). (The prolific Jesús Franco Manera had already paved the way for Spanish horror in general with *Gritos en la Noche* [Cries in the Night] in 1962, but this *Les Yeux sans Visage* inspired shocker focused on gory surgery footage, not stock monsters, which was curiously more acceptable by the censors.) The direction of *El Sonido Prehistórico* is often pedestrian, recalling the lower end horror fare being produced in Mexico at the time. The film takes its time getting to the heart of the matter— the first thirty minutes are laboriously talky, even for those of us who like a little story and characterization to accompany the mayhem—and there are a few too many lulls between the first appearance of the monster and the anticlimactic finale (which is made worse by the false ending at the seventy minute mark).

Spanish one-sheet art for El Sonido Prehistórico (1964) ARCE Films

What this film *does* have going for it is a reasonably sound script: aside from the contrived nature of the prehistoric antagonist, the scriptwriters' clever reworking of familiar materials is refreshing, and holds up well in light of the now dated formula. Several conventions that the viewer may expect are carefully avoided, including the clichés of greed intensely explored by John Huston in *Treasure of the Sierra Madre* (1948) then clumsily swiped by countless screenwriters thereafter. (When it comes to dying a violent death or being poor but very much alive, most of our cast decides that being on the dole isn't so bad a prospect, and thus try to pull out while the going's still good.) *El Sonido Prehistórico* also boasts the type of claustrophobia best represented by George A Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1968); much like the seminal modern zombie flick, the house itself becomes a character in the tense proceedings. In fact, most of the script's shortcomings correlate with the monster itself. Our feature creature has no problem smashing through reinforced doors, yet the house's flimsy shutters manage to keep it at bay. Additionally, a couple of thrown axes give it far more grief than several crates of dynamite detonated in its lap. (There is also the matter of rampant sexism, but this is typical of Eurotrash of the sixties

and seventies, so it will be reluctantly forgiven.)

DVD box art for El Sonido Prehistórico (2003) Alpha Video Distributors, Inc. #4191-D

On display in *El Sonido Prehistórico* are some fairly grisly deaths, mostly presented as after-the-fact gore. The cave settings—if they are in fact man made—are quite convincing and contribute to the film's atmosphere. Overall, the special effects and art direction is commendable. Again, only those aspects related to the monster—like 'the sound of horror' which makes one just want to bitch slap the creature, and the unsatisfying visual effects punctuating the finale—are disappointing.

El Sonido Prehistórico was early in the careers of its two female stars, namely Soledad Miranda and Ingrid Pitt. Miranda (1943–70) had secured a career in genre films working for Spanish auteur Jesús Franco Manera in the few short years before her untimely death in an automobile accident, appearing in such erotic horror films as *Les Cauchemars Naissent la Nuit* [Nightmares are Born at Night] (1970) and *Las Vampiras* [The Vampire's Women] (1971). This was the screen debut of Pitt (1937–); although her contributions to the horror genre are few and far between, the image of the actress baring her bloodied fangs and ample bosom in one of several

promotional stills taken from *The House that Dripped Blood* (1970) has secured her a place in the hearts of all horror fans that have ever had even a passing erotic thought about female vampires.

In a film career that spanned thirty eight years as a writer and director, this was the only horror outing for Conde (1915–). Co-scriptwriter Tallas had a handful of films to his directorial credit, including the dreary but almost engaging shocker *The Nightmare Never Ends* (1980), which was later truncated and worked into the inexcusable horror anthology *Night Train to Terror* (1985).

When it was originally released stateside, *El Sonido Prehistórico* was shown as part of a double bill that also included Mario Bava's *Operazione Paura* aka *Kill, Baby, Kill!* Although nowhere near the same caliber as Bava's supernatural shocker, Conde's creature feature is still a worthwhile low budget effort, thankfully saved from obscurity by Alpha Video.

GUSANOS INFERNALES
¡UN PODER PELIGROSO Y MORTAL QUE LOGRA REPRODUCIR EN SEGUNDOS MILLONES Y MILLONES DE GUSANOS DIABOLICOS!!
DON SCARDINO
PATRICIA PEARCY
R.A. DOW
JEAN SULLIVAN
DIRECCION DE JEFF LIEBERMAN
ROBERT PRICE

Mexican lobby card for Squirm (1976) Rozil Distribuidor

SQUIRM (1976)

The Squirm Company [US] DIR: Jeff Lieberman PRO: George Manasse SCR: Jeff Lieberman NOV: Squirm by Richard Curtis [Ace Books; 1976; US PB edition] Squirm by Richard Curtis [Sphere Books; 1976; UK PB edition] DOP: Joseph Mangine EXP: Joseph Beruh and Edgar Lansbury MFX: Rick Baker SFX: Don Farnsworth, Lee Howard and Bill Milling MUS: Robert Prince STR: Carl Dagenhart, Walter Dimmick, RA Dow, Ralph Flanders, Fran Higgins, Kim Iocouvozzi, Julia Kopp, WA Lindblatt, Peter MacLean, Harold Mumm, William Newman, Carol Jean Owens, Patricia Pearcy, Barbara Quinn, Angel Sande, Don Scardino, Jim Shirah, Albert Smith, Jean Sullivan and Leslie Thorsen

AKA: *I Carnivori Venuti dalla Savana* [The Carnivores Come from the Savannah]

Gusanos Infernales [Infernal Worms]

Maskarna [The Worms]

Matelijat [The Worms]

Der Nacht der Reusewormen [The Night of the Bait Worms]

La Nuit des Vers Géants [The Night of the Giant Worms]

Squirm: Invasion der Bestien [Squirm: Invasion of the Beasts]

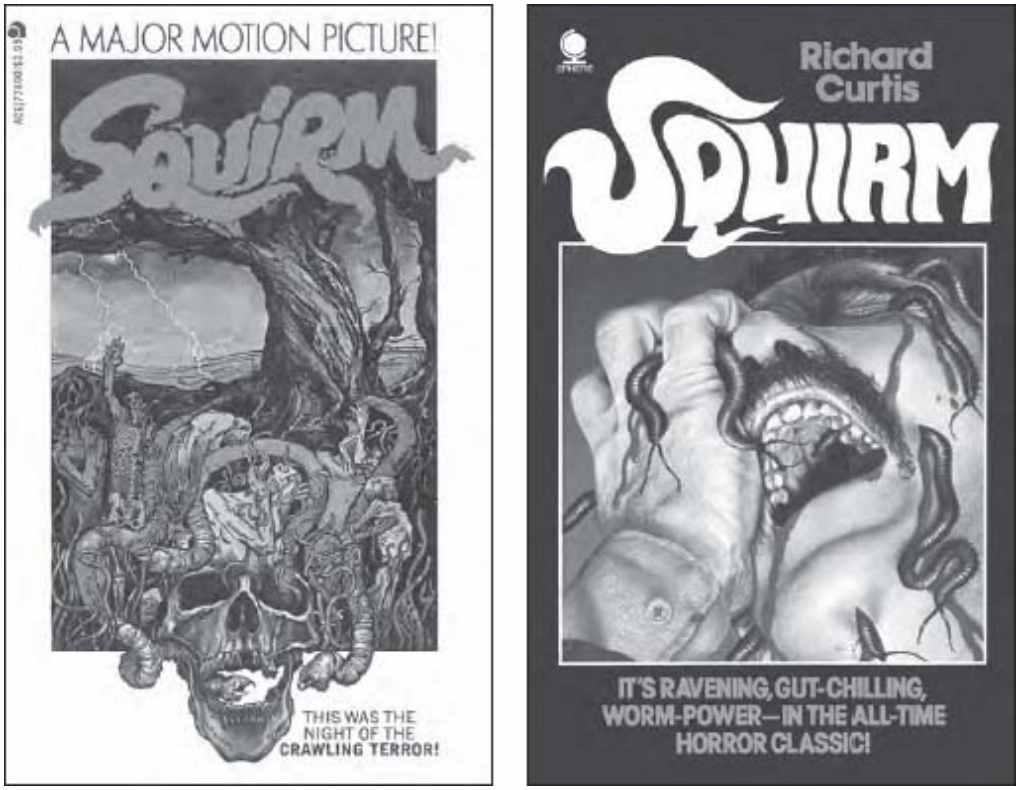
Approximately 93m; Color; Rated PG

DVD: *Squirm* [MGM Home Entertainment; 93m; WS; NTSC R1]

VHS: *Squirm* [MGM/UA Home Video; 93m; FS; NTSC]

ADL: “This was the Night of the Crawling Terror!”

“LATE IN the evening of September 29, 1975, a sudden electrical storm struck a rural sea coast of Georgia. Power lines, felled by high winds, sent hundreds of thousands of volts surging into the muddy ground, cutting off all electricity to the small, secluded town of Fly Creek. During the period that followed the storm, the citizens of Fly Creek experienced what scientists believe to be one of the most bizarre freaks of nature ever recorded. This is the story…” Sure, this claim has as much authenticity to it as artificial processed cheese food substitute, but we already *knew* that.


A MAJOR MOTION PICTURE!
SQUIRM
THIS WAS THE NIGHT OF THE CRAWLING TERROR!
Richard Curtis
SQUIRM
IT'S RAVENING, GUT-CHILLING, WORM-POWER—IN THE ALL-TIME HORROR CLASSIC!

Squirm paperback novelizations.
Left US (1976) Ace Books #77890
Right UK (1976) Sphere Books

Mick (Don Scardino), an antique collector with some time on his hands, decides to spend his vacation with newfound love interest Geri (Patricia Pearcy), a shy country girl from Fly Creek he recently met while pursuing his hobby abroad. Much to his chagrin, her home town proves uninviting to big city folk like himself; worse, he soon finds himself labeled a

troublemaker by the Sheriff when he and his new love interest report the discovery of a human skeleton in her neighbor's field. Adding to the mystery is an entire truckload of missing fish bait that proves as elusive as some of the unfortunate townsfolk.

I became obsessed with this film at a fairly young age; accosted by both the television ad spot and a copy of the film novelization in a local pharmacy, I desperately wanted to see the film, but my parents—besides having no interest in sitting through it themselves—thought it would only contribute to my morbid inclinations. For far too many years, the wonderfully rendered ad art depicting a grinning skull festooned with flesh eating bloodworms became so ingrained in my psyche that for me it would ultimately come to epitomize horror cinema of the seventies. Of course, no movie could ever hope to fulfill such lofty expectations, so even though I enjoyed the film when I finally got to see it ten years later, it was almost disappointing. Twenty years after the fact, the pangs of nostalgia have made me far more receptive.

Sure, the script occasionally eschews logic and reason for shocks (often for budgetary reasons), but how can one *not* love a film that boasts thousands of squirming, squealing bloodworms (creepy little bastards that they are)? Granted the film would have benefited greatly had they dispensed entirely with the undulating mounds of featureless rubber night crawlers that threaten to bury our heroes alive during the last reel—as it couldn't have looked any worse had they used CGI—but the rest of the film stands out as one of the better attempts at low budget horror from the seventies.

Unlike most killer bug fare, the script isn't formulaic, and the characters are believable even if they aren't very likeable. (For once, all the country folk actually *look* like simple country folk, and are not portrayed as the inbred rednecks that usually clutter backwoods independent horror fare. Ignorant and paranoid, maybe, but not complete imbeciles.) Much of the movie plays like a teen detective novel (Lieberman himself has made a great many references to Nancy Drew), and the viewer remains hooked despite the fact we know the rather silly what and why from the get-go. Sly humor, good performances, and slop buckets full of screaming, carnivorous salt water invertebrates… yes indeed, it's got all the makings of a classic, nostalgia or no nostalgia.

Also of note is the evocative and occasionally creepy score by Robert Prince (which was performed by the London Philharmonic Orchestra, if you

can believe it). A prolific television composer in the sixties and seventies, he contributed to such syndicated series as *Night Gallery* (1970–73), *The Sixth Sense* (1972) and *Ghost Story* (1972–73). He also scored such made for television genre outings as *Gargoyles* (1972), *The Dead Don't Die* (1975), and *Snowbeast* (1977) as well as the theatrically released *JD's Revenge* (1976). Since the early nineties, he has produced music solely for the video game market.

THIS WAS THE NIGHT
of the Crawling Terror!
SQUIRM
...an experience in PUPE FRIGHT!!
R RESTRICTED
'SQUIRM' DON SCARDINO PATRICIA PEARCY R.A. DOW JEAN SULLIVAN
EDGAR LANSBURY & JOSEPH BERUH GEORGE MANASSE
ROBERT PRINCE JEFF LIEBERMAN

US pressbook advertisement for Squirm (1976) American International Pictures, Inc.

Scardino (1949–) started out as an actor in his teens (mostly television), but made the switch to directing in the eighties, a field in which he's still involved today. Dick Smith's protégé Baker (1950–), of course, was one of the pioneering special effects artists of the seventies. Since 1965, cinematographer Mangine has had a modest and interesting career lensing exploitation films; he went on to try his hand at directing his own horror film in 1986 with *Neon Maniacs…* and failed.

Director Lieberman only made one other notable genre offering, *Blue Sunshine*, which was released the same year as *Squirm* and has also achieved something of a cult following in its own right. (He was also responsible for the *Deliverance* inspired slasher flick *Just Before Dawn* in 1981, and despite the fact the script is better than most of its ilk, it is ultimately forgettable.) The recent DVD release *of Squirm* is rightfully the definitive version of the film; not only does it include some brief nudity that was cut at the last minute to avoid an R rating on first release, it is also struck from the original negative and color corrected. Furthermore, it boasts audio commentary from the director/screenwriter that is time well spent for anyone who appreciates this or low budget films in general. In spite of his deadpan delivery, Lieberman's narration is insightful and engaging throughout. (It's interesting to discover that Martin Sheen, Kim Basinger and Sylvester Stallone—all virtual unknowns at the time—were close to accepting the roles taken by Scardino, Pearcy and Dow, respectively. The former actors' merits aside, I for one am happy they opted for the latter unknowns, even if they never amounted to anything in Tinseltown.) Listening to Lieberman, it is obvious more thought was put into the script than usually applied to films *of Squirm's* ilk. One can see why it holds up well so many years later, nostalgia or no nostalgia.

THE WEREWOLF OF WASHINGTON (1973)

> Millco Productions, Inc. [US] DIR: Milton Moses Ginsberg PRO: Nina Schulman SCR: Milton Moses Ginsberg DOP: Robert M Baldwin Jr. MFX: Robert O'Bradovich MUS: Arnold Freed STR: Li Ling Ai, Terry Alexander, Nancy Andrews, Norman Beim, Rusty Blitz, Jacqueline Brooks, Jim Campagna, Beeson Carroll, Stephen Cheng, Anita Daniels, Edmond Dante, Thayer David, Spencer Davis, Phil Denman, Despo Diamantidou, Henry Ferrentino, John Garson, Danna Hansen, Jane House, Clifton James, Katalin Kallay, Glenn Kezer, Joel levitch, Richard Marr, Biff McGuire, Dennis McMullen, Mark Mezendez, Gary Neil Miller (aka Michael Dunn), Kenneth Moore, Robert Patterson, Lenka Peterson, Randy Phillips, John Henry Redwood, Charles Regan, Jane Marla Robbins, Kyle Rote, Jerry Roth, Michael Sarossy, Al Schneiderman, Thurmon Scott, Tom Scott, Robert Sheridan, Jim Simpson, Richard Sorrentino, Barbara Spiegel,

Derek Steeley, Dean Stockwell, Harry Stockwell, James Tolkan, Jack Waltzer, Jan Welt, Richard Wexler and Ben Yaffee Approximately 89m; Color; Rated PG DVD: The *Werewolf of Washington* [Alpha Video; 90(89)m; FS; NTSC R1] [Vipco; 85m; FS; PAL R2] VHS: The *Werewolf of Washington* [Monterey Home Video; 90(89)m; FS; NTSC] ADL: "Washington Paralyzed in Fear of Hate-Crazed Monster!"

POLITICAL GO-GETTER Jack Whittier (Dean Stockwell) is the youngest member of the Washington Press Corporation, as well as its fastest rising star. While on business in Hungary, he has a run in with a local lycanthrope whom he beats to death with a silver-headed cane, but not before receiving a love bite from the flea bitten shapeshifter. A gypsy woman gives him a charm, but he immediately flushes it down the toilet upon his return to the States. (That's how one gets rid of dead goldfish, *not* gypsy charms, you nitwit.) At the first sign of a full moon, he makes short work of a senator's wife, which proves convenient as the President wanted her out of the way anyway. From here on in, it becomes Fur & Loathing on the Campaign Trail. (Okay, you think *my* puns are bad, in *The Werewolf of Washington* our hero is told that his curse is "nothing to whimper about," and his girlfriend tells him with a straight face to "quit barking at her." Yeah, the *pun*-ishment I subject upon my readers will seem like Pulitzer Prize winning wordplay once you've sat through *this* shameless flick, just you wait and see.) This sucker was somewhat difficult—nay, *impossible*—to nail down on the first viewing, which may or may not be to its benefit. The first couple of reels play the material straight, trying quite hard (but failing) to create any tension. Even when the werewolf is revealed to be a particularly low rent monster that would have the most timid four year old giggling at the funny dog man, the production insists on keeping a poker face. But then, before you know it, the script degenerates into self effacing parody and toothless satire that can't decide whether to focus on the stock monster antics or the Watergate style backdrop. Unfortunately, like most trash films, it is most funny when it *isn't* trying to be, although there are a few scenes that exhibit some much appreciated deadpan wit. Case in point, when Whittier is forced into a bowling game with the President and—it nearing the full moon—his fingers have swollen so that he can't let go of the ball. (Okay, so maybe it's not the material itself that is funny, but the actual delivery. Or the fact I was grasping at straws.) One can't emphasize the schizoid nature of the film

enough. One minute, the bloodthirsty werewolf is mauling unwary victims, the next he is running around on all fours in his office, frantically chewing on the rug and lamp cord. One minute, the film focuses on politics with a sober eye, the next, the viewer is left watching in disbelief as pint sized mad scientist Dr Kiss (Michael Dunn) finds himself being tongue-lapped by a panting Dean Stockwell sporting a mohair facial.

Despite the intentional tongue in cheek humor, the scriptwriter allows for some tremendous gaffes and an unreasonable suspension of disbelief. The werewolf's first victim is stuffed in a shopping cart and left in a busy parking lot; the papers claim she was "Found Dead, Guts Ripped Open," yet the viewer is only made privy to a small bloody smear on the front of her dress, easily removed with a touch of club soda. This I may be able to write off as a stab at sensationalism in the press, but I don't for one minute buy that no one discovers the corpse until midday, considering that it is left in front of a bustling grocery store. Didn't any of the customers think of reporting the eviscerated corpse, let alone the employees who usually collect the shopping carts? Or is this satire as well? You tell me.

US pressbook advertisement for The Werewolf of Washington (1973) Millco Productions, Inc.

Obviously, the biggest draw in *The Werewolf of Washington* is Dean ‘I will rule the world with my eyebrows’ Stockwell; although he seems to be sleepwalking through most of the film—no doubt uninspired by the material—he manages a few flashes of underplayed brilliance. Once the makeup is on, though, he wastes no time in chewing the scenery… and as at least one scene clearly attests, this is to be taken quite literally. With his almost lupine appearance, Stockwell looks the part of our resident werewolf better *without* the dime store makeup. (So did Jack Nicholson in the 1994 film *Wolf,* for that matter.) Stockwell’s most notable genre role was as the evil Wilbur Whateley in the big screen adaptation of HP Lovecraft’s *The Dunwich Horror* four years previous. He would later secure his cult following with his participation in David Lynch’s *Blue Velvet* (1987) and—at least in the eyes of mainstream America—as Scott Bakula’s co-star in the popular television series *Quantum Leap* which ran from 1989 to 1993.

Also on hand as a Budapest official is Thayer David (1927–78), best known for his portrayal of several ingratiating and memorable characters on *Dark Shadows* (1966–71) as well as the theatrical films inspired by Dan Curtis’ cult television series. Unfortunately this was one of the last appearances of Dunn né Miller (1934–73), a talented dwarf actor who appeared in a handful of no budget shockers, including *Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1971) and *The Mutations* (1973), as well as the posthumously released imports *Terror! Il Castello delle Donne Maladette* [Terror! The Castle of the Cursed Women] aka *Frankenstein’s Castle of Freaks* and *La Loba y Paloma* [The She-Wolf and the Dove] aka *House of the Damned* (both 1974). Boasting an IQ of 178, the 3’6” performer was a concert pianist by the age of fifteen, when *chrondrodystrophy* sadly put a stop to his musical career. After taking a variety of odd jobs—from sports reporter to hotel detective—he turned to acting. He was nominated for a Tony in 1963 and an Oscar in 1965, but due to a lack of opportunities for actors of his small stature, he soon found himself relegated to supporting roles in exploitation films, much like the similarly diminutive Angelo Rossitto (1908–91). Dunn’s most fondly remembered role was as the much loved evil genius Dr Miguelito Loveless in the television series *The Wild Wild West* (1965–69).

Cinematographer Baldwin also photographed the haunting neo-vampire film *Let's Scare Jessica to Death* (1971) and Joel M Reed's obscure horror anthology *Blood Bath* (1976). He continued to shoot made for television films and straight to video features until 1991. Makeup effects artist O'Bradovich (?–1993) also hooked up with director Reed, supplying the red stuff for *Blood Bath* as well as the infamous splatterfest *The Incredible Torture Show* (1976) aka *Blood Sucking Freaks.*

Truly, a train wreck of a film that has to be seen to be, uhm, appreciated. When you figure out just what the director-cum-screenwriter was thinking, feel free to drop me a line.

ZOMBIES (1964)

Iselin-Tenney Productions, Inc. [US] DIR: Del Tenney PRO: Del Tenney SCR: Del Tenney DOP: François Farkas MUS: Lon E Norman STR: Vanore Aikens, Walter Coy, Heather Hewitt, William Joyce, Matthew King, Betty Hyatt Linton, Rebecca Oliver, Robert Stanton, Dan Stapleton, Don Strawn, George-Ann Williamson and Don Strawn's Calypso Band

AKA: *I Eat Your Skin*

Voodoo Bloodbath

Zombie Bloodbath

Approximately 84m; b&w; Unrated

DVD: I *Eat Your Skin* [Alpha Video; 81m; FS; NTSC R1]

VHS: *I Eat Your Skin* [Rhino Video; 82(81)m; FS; NTSC] [Something Weird Video; 90(81)m; FS; NTSC]

TOM HARRIS (William Joyce), writer of such trashy novels as *Hot Lips,* gets dragged to a remote island in the Bahamas by his agent Fair-child (Dan Stapleton) and his wife Coral (Betty Hyatt Linton) so he can fulfill a delinquent book contract without being distracted by the fairer sex. (It's safe to say that Mrs Fairchild doesn't fall into that category.) Following a bumpy

plane ride, they reach the aptly named Voodoo Island; no sooner has the dime store thespian wandered off on his own does he witness a native cut down by a machete wielding zombie, then saves a young skinny dipper from being the creature's next victim. The sunbathing beauty, Jeanine (Heather Hewitt), turns out to be the daughter of the renowned Dr August Biladeau (Robert Stanton), who—along with their host Charles Bentley— is working on a cure for cancer that uses cobra venom as its catalyst. Bentley and his compatriot have found it advantageous to be living just next door to superstitious islanders who are partial to human sacrifices, which offers them no shortage of human test subjects. Predictably, Tom falls for the mad doctor's daughter; unfortunately, the natives have decided that she is next in line to play the thankless role of "the goat without horns".

It's not as creepy as the hit series *Lost* (2004–), and for those viewers who hate a good mystery, one doesn't have to wait long to know exactly where they stand with this 'exotic' color by numbers feature. With a story that seems to have helped pave the way for Marino Girolami's *La Regina dei Cannibali* [The Queen of the Cannibals] (1979)—which was later released Stateside with new footage as *Dr Butcher, M.D.*—this poverty row effort has it all… even if none of it is done particularly well. This is epitomized by the nonsensical sci fi elements thrown in for no better reason than to distract the average horror fan from realizing that when it comes to the voodoo island antics, they've seen it all before.

Given the very limited means at his disposal, filmmaker Tenney makes an admirable attempt to churn out something approximating professionalism. The rampant corner cutting is what proves to be both *Zombies'* biggest boon and bane. The film appears to have been edited by a right handed editor with a pair of left handed scissors… the rounded, dull variety that were mandatory in grade school lest dull witted children poke out their own eyes (which would have been an issue had some of us been forced to watch *this* film in class). To be fair, blame should also be placed at the feet of the person or persons responsible for continuity (if indeed any were allowed on the set of *Zombies* once the film started rolling). If the scene of a woman whose hair becomes inexplicably wet for several seconds before she is pushed into a swimming pool doesn't make you do a double take, that of our hero commenting on a beautiful moon in the middle of the day might do the

trick. (Do I sense some day for night footage that was reacquisitioned for another scene?)

US pressbook advertisement for Zombies (1970) Cinemation Industries

DVD box art for Zombies (2003) Alpha Video Distributors, Inc. #4106-D

Zombies is one of those quaint little excursions where the special effects—or as the renowned late night horror host Zacherley would say, special *defects*—are everything you hope for from such a bargain basement production. The zombie transformations are quick, and accomplished with the same brand of time lapse dissolves that had been a staple of horror films since the thirties. The *zuvembi* are not without their traditional charms, although they are far more reminiscent *of Sugar Hill* (1974) than I *Walked with a Zombie* (1943). Still looking for a recipe with which to make your own army of the walking dead? It's simple and easy enough to remember. Forget the radioactive snake venom; all you really need is a cup of Quaker Oats, some cotton, and a bisected ping pong ball, and you're set to go! Instant zombie, just add water.

And if you thought the effects couldn't look more destitute, take a gander at the miniature used during the volcanic finale; when the papier-mâché island tips, exposing the fact that the set piece is but floating on the water's surface, you'll know it couldn't have gotten any worse than this and still be shown at a drive-in.

For the timpani enthusiasts in our midst, Don Strawn orchestrates some jaunty calypso music in a failed effort to convince the viewer that this sucker was shot somewhere in the heart of the Caribbean and not in rural Florida. There is also no shortage of ceremonial dancing, more convincing than the westernized choreography usually displayed in bargain basement voodoo fare, but still lacking in authenticity. There are also some real life scenes of cobras being milked for their venom, in an effort to give the film and its scientifically challenged goings-on some credibility. This fails as well.

One of the film's most annoying conjectures is one of fluency, or a lack thereof. Exactly how Dr Bentley has managed to gain the natives' respect—much less communicate with them—is a complete and utter mystery. One can practically see the natives roll their eyes in disgust every time the actor attempts to speak Spanish, as it has to be the most flagrant abuse the language has ever suffered at the hands of someone learning it just prior to the scene being blocked.

But if the film holds anything so daunting as to deter the viewer from allowing the movie to run its course, it is the character of Coral, a proto stereotypical *yenta* with the most grating fingers-on-a-chalkboard voice this side of Fran 'please hate my guts' Drescher. The actress thrust into the role is not incompetent, and the same could be said for most of the players in the

film. She even handles herself with as much professionalism as the script allows. But whatever sadomasochistic soul gave this actress carte blanche should be indicted for the proliferation of toxic noise pollution, and promptly sent to the chair without a last meal for this gross inhumanity.

If *Zombies* offers any compensation for the above travesty, it fulfills this obligation with a high point that is almost stellar. One can't help but wonder if this simple but ingenious plot device—undoubtedly the zenith of the screenwriter's nadir scraping career—was the mainspring of inspiration that convinced him to justify its conception with an entire film. I am, of course, referring to the zombie versus seaplane winner takes all showdown. The protagonists aren't exactly stranded—their plane is still functional, just a little short of fuel when they land—so there's nothing to keep them from leaving the island when things get a little hairy… except for one unpredictable eventuality. What's scarier than a zombie wielding a machete? Why, a zombie carrying a full box of dynamite who has absolutely no compunctions about walking into a spinning airplane propeller, that's what.

And, yes, as every other film book has pointed out, despite the abundance of skin on display, absolutely none of it is eaten, despite the irresistible re-release title. (Our very first victim getting his head lopped off amounts to the only real gore in the film; I suggest you restrain yourself from blinking or you might miss it.) Truth be told (yet again), notorious exploitation film distributor Jerry Gross (1940–2002) needed something to fill the second half of a double bill that included the politically incorrect and pleasantly nauseating Summer of Hate shocker *I Drink Your Blood* in 1970, and somehow *Zombies* became the unlikely candidate, thus fulfilling its label of a B-film.

Beginning in 1963, director Tenney (1930–) helmed his triumvirate of destitute horrors, which included this tropical number as well as the old dark house outing *Curse of the Living Corpse* and the surf styled *The Horror of Party Beach,* the latter of which was immortalized by Warren Publishing with its own photo magazine. (At least one source claims that *Zombies* was actually filmed in 1961 but sat on the shelf for three years before getting distribution, although facts point to it being shot in the spring of 1964 and released the same year.) Prior to producing his own shopworn shockers, Tenney functioned as assistant director on two nudie flicks, namely *Satan in High Heels* (1962) and *Orgy at Lil's Place* (1963).

Actor Coy (1909–74) appeared in a few genre films during the fifties, including *Phantom of the Rue Morgue* and *Them!* (both 1954, and both uncredited), and *Cult of the Cobra* (1955), but he spent most of his days trampling scrub grass on the sets of B-westerns. I would bet my bottom dollar that actor Dan Stapleton is none other than a somewhat youngish Richard Kennedy (aka Wolfgang Roehm), an engaging character actor who appeared in *Invasion of the Blood Farmers* (1973), *Ilsa, She-Wolf of the SS* (1975), *Ilsa, Harem Keeper of the Oil Sheiks* (1976) and *The Capture of Bigfoot* (1979). The rest of the players barely have a dozen films to their collective credit (none of them genre efforts); if ever a cheap but adequate cast perfectly embodied the spirit of the struggling actor, this would be it.

And not to be overlooked (despite his exclusion from the stock credits above), Florida filmmaker William Grefé (1930–) functioned as second unit director on *Zombies.* He would leave his own mark on the world of poverty stricken horror two years later with the brain damaged regional classics *Death Curse of Tartu* and *Sting of Death* (both 1966).

Another Z-grade shocker that—whatever indignities it may heap upon the viewer—deserves to be restored.

US pressbook advertisement for the “Super Soul Show Marathon” (1973)
American International Pictures, Inc.

I WAS RAISED in a residential neighborhood just downwind of a small one traffic light town known as Granite Falls, tucked away in the wilds of Washington State. Racism was part of the inherent ideology to most people living in these parts. The predominant mindsets weren't nearly as extreme or confrontational as the hateful intolerance espoused by the Ku Klux Klan or other white supremacist groups, but it was present just the same, usually just beneath the surface. The fact that there was little or no confrontation on these issues was because there was little or no cultural diversity, so it was rarely an issue. Growing up in the seventies, I personally knew no black people, or even Hispanics or Asians, for that matter; the fact that it was something of a big deal that one of my school friends was Jewish, and another living down the road was Polish, attests to the rampant WASPism.

As a young child, my only exposure to African Americans and their cultural differences was on television, which was often defined by the likes of Antonio'Huggy Bear' Fargas or JJ Walker. Aside from crime dramas and the occasional sitcom like *The Jeffersons,* I had nothing personal on which to establish a perspective, so in many ways these people seemed almost alien to me. (By the time I was in my teens, the high school I attended could finally boast *three* people of color, one of whom I became good friends with; since he was also a film geek and comic fan, this was inevitable. But I digress.) Occasionally, racism spurred by this cultural isolation would rear its ugly head in my presence during these early formative years. Even as I child, I questioned this hatred or intolerance (as I did pretty much everything), but

my views were no doubt colored by these negative ideologies. But then it happened. An epiphany. An event that forced me to take a stance, to go against the pervading views that black people were somehow inherently different—inferior even—than everyone else. At the tender age of seven, I saw *Blacula* on late night television.

As a child, I inevitably empathized with the monsters in the creature features and comic books that dominated my leisure hours. Sure, these bogeymen made some bad choices—who hasn't?—but they were often misunderstood, and forced into taking rash actions that may have been avoided had the 'heroes' taken the effort to talk first, shoot later. If the monsters weren't of alien origin, they were white men and—occasionally—women. Count Mamuwalde changed all that. You couldn't get much 'blacker,' and he was just too damn cool for words. He wasn't a jive talking pimp or an Uncle Tom sell out motherfucker; he was a regal, intelligent, sympathetic antihero who embraced and defended his racial heritage, and whose actions as a killer had absolutely nothing to do with the color of his skin. (And let's not forget the fangs and funky sideburns. He was a *seventies* vampire, after all.) Believe it or not, *this* was the moment I realized that humanity isn't defined by one's pigmentation or ethnic upbringing. Forget that It's A Small World After All crap. If black people, too, could be monsters—especially one as groovy as Blacula—then they were alright by me.

US pressbook advertisement for the re-release double-bill of Coffy and J.D.’s Revenge (1977) American International Pictures, Inc.

It wasn’t until the video age that I was finally able to track down the other monster flicks featuring heavily tanned beasties, having only seen the two Blacula films via truncated television prints prior to this. Admittedly none of the others made anywhere near the same impression—Casey’s take on Mr Hyde was the closest—even though several proved to be better films in some respects, but this subgenre crossbreed I still hold dear. Very, *very* few of the films made during the heyday of black exploitation cinema could be classified as monster flicks, but to me those that were remain a very important and even groundbreaking footnote in the annals of both exploitation *and* horror cinema. Despite their limited financial success, these particular horror films to me were far more cross cultural than their peers. Sure, the films of Richard Roundtree, Pam Grier and Fred Williamson are some of the best exploitation cinema the seventies had to offer. But only creature features like *Blacula* could have spoken the way they did to an adolescent horror fan like myself, leaving me and hopefully some other viewers with a welcome case of color blindness.

What is commonly referred to as the black film explosion of the early seventies—or blaxploi-tation cinema, if you’re inclined to embrace the limiting and not entirely PC label that was coined circa 1972 by a press agent—was not created in a vacuum. Films featuring a predominantly colored cast and crew, produced almost entirely for the black community, were nothing new. As far back as the thirties, African Americans struggling for their own identity had their own cinema, and their own stars, overshadowed by Hollywood to such a degree that most white Americans were oblivious to their existence. Those who struggled to make a name for themselves in white Hollywood—Mantan Moreland comes immediately to mind—were relegated to comedic supporting roles that relied on racial preconceptions for humor. It was the struggle for equal rights that punctuated the fifties and sixties which helped lead the way for a more visible black cinema.

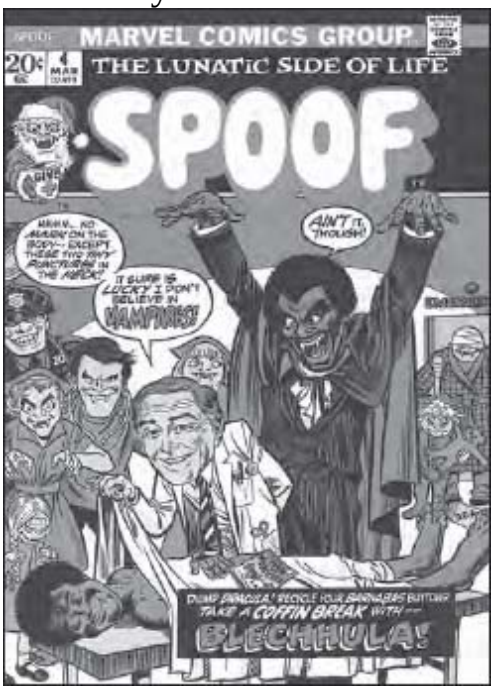
Inarguably, the two films that precipitated the wave of black films were Melvin van Peebles’ controversial *Sweet Sweetback’s Baadasssss Song* and the play it safe *Shaft* (both 1971); the former is now considered an

independent classic that transcends the genre it created, the latter set the stage for all the predominantly black action films that followed and further opened the floodgates of modern black cinema by, in part, making it more accessible to white filmgoers. The next four years proved to be the most fruitful, dishing up everything from the highly influential *Superfly* (1972) to vehicles for such immensely talented actors as the aforementioned Grier and Williamson, the former of whom worked her way up from what were predominantly white exploitation flicks.

By the end of the seventies, there were roughly 200 films that made up what we now refer to as the black cinema explosion. Granted, most of these films were ultimately produced by white producers who saw the opportunity to exploit a burgeoning market (which is where most of the 'exploitation' comes from in 'black exploitation,' regardless of the film's artistic intent or social relevance), but most of the revenue still came from an urban black audience who were desperate for films that starred people of color and—if they were lucky—actually spoke the language of their cultural esthetics, giving them a much deserved, long overdue sense of cultural pride.

Although seventies black cinema was by and large devoted to the immensely popular crime film (since this was a subject that, unfortunately, the inner city audiences dealt with on a daily basis), filmmakers toyed with other genres within the African American context as well. It was inevitable that producers and scriptwriters would attempt 'colorful' updatings of the horror film, trading in Dracula and Frankenstein's monster's pasty complexions for something a little more mocha. The works of Mary Shelley, Bram Stoker, and RL Stevenson were deconstructed to accommodate racial politics and monsters with a bit more 'soul'. Hollywood blockbusters like William Friedkin's *The Exorcist* (1974) were plagiarized, whereas others dealing with voodoo were blaxploitation efforts if only by default. By the time these Nubian creature features started picking up steam, black cinema (and independent drive-in cinema as a whole) was being edged out of the theatres by the Cineplex friendly multi million dollar extravaganzas being churned out of Hollywood which were also learning to diversify their casts.

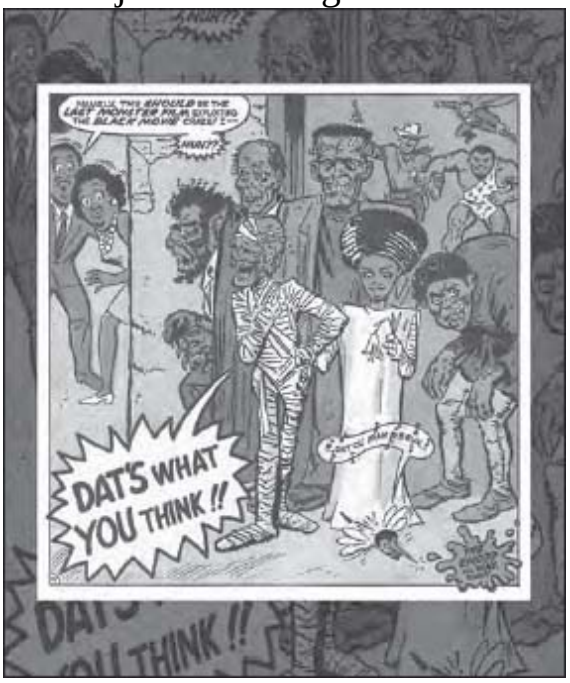
Unfortunately, this subgenre never had much of an opportunity to evolve, although all black films have been making something of a comeback in recent years. With the close of the seventies, many of the barriers in cinema had been breached. Although blacks in mainstream films were still often employed in a token fashion, Hollywood was showing signs of progress when it came to diversifying their casts and to the roles being given to African Americans, even if it was a slow, uphill battle. Black cinema soon garnered a respect long since denied it by the mainstream with the likes of Spike Lee and John Singleton, but more exploitative efforts—horror films among them—would have little part in it. (There is a longstanding joke about token black characters in horror films, and how one can predict their chances of survival by the color of their skin. Having seen more than most, I can say that this bon mot is far from unfounded.)



Mamuwalde puts the bite on Dr. Welby, M.D. whilst Marvel puts the bite on black horror films. Cover art for *Spoof* V1#4 (March 1973)

During the eighties, most of the black creature features were re-released on video by companies like Xenon, who realized there was still a niche market for such films. (Xenon, though, had the unpleasant habit of re-titling predominantly white films and masquerading them as black exploitation efforts. Al Adamson's *Nurse Sheri* [1977] —which had only two black actors

in supporting roles— was re-released as *Black Voodoo,* and Paul Annett's *The Beast Must Die* [1974] —again, two actors shy of being colorless—bore the title *Black Werewolf.)* A few newer productions accompanied these re-releases, but these amateurish efforts were quickly lost amidst the glut of straight-to-video efforts cluttering the densely packed shelves of chain video stores. (There was even a hardcore sex effort, the 1987 quickie *Lust for Blackula*, which shows just how ingrained its inspiration was on the cinematic psyche.)



A very prophetic closure for "Blechhula!" from Spoof V1 #4 March 1973) Marvel Comics Group

Not surprisingly, there was still a demand for cinema that featured strong black characters, and the occasional horror film would reflect this. *Def by Temptation* (1990), which featured a struggling

Samuel L Jackson, was a supernatural shocker featuring a predominantly African American cast. Bernard Rose's *Candyman* (1992)—as well as its two inferior sequels—succeeded if only because the sympathetic bogeyman was portrayed by Tony Todd (1954–), a versatile actor with a commanding presence who has almost made a career of supporting roles in horror and sci fi fare. Todd also stole the show in the Tom Savini remake of George A Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1990)—not

an easy task, since he was filling the shoes of the late Duane Jones and vying for screen time with Tom Towles and Patricia Tallman.

The anthology *Tales from the Hood* (1995) placed the black horror film in a more modern urban environment, trading in psychedelic soul and platform shoes for hip hop and Converse high tops. Sadly, this film proved to be the final screen appearance of Rosalind Cash, who had already made her mark in the seventies with *The Omega Man* (1971) and *Dr Black, Mr Hyde* (1975).

The same year, black horror went mainstream with Wes Craven's *Vampire in Brooklyn* (1995), a vehicle for Eddie Murphy that rarely strayed from the comedian's established formula. The strongest black monster movie icon of the nineties, though, was Wesley Snipes' updating of Marvel Comics' *Blade* (1998), a half human vampire hunter whose antics would give Van Helsing a coronary. This melding of action and horror was popular enough to spawn two sequels before losing steam. Whether or not these primarily white, big budget shoot 'em ups with a twist truly qualify as black exploitation or even black cinema is up for debate.

There are some other examples of the subgenre's inability to fully give up the ghost, like Ernest R Dickerson's *Bones* (2001), a vengeance from beyond the grave flick starring rapper Snoop Dogg né Calvin Cordozar Broadus (1971–) as well as the undisputed queen of black exploitation films, Pam Grier.

The biggest push in the right direction was from Full Moon Video's 'new urban horrors' division, Alchemy Entertainment (which later became Big City Pictures). In the few years it was around, this label released a handful of horror films that featured predominantly black casts against inner city backdrops, including *Ragdoll* (1999), *Killjoy* (2000), *The Horrible Dr Bones* (2000) and *Cryptz* (2002). Alas, these films were in general poorly made outings that held little interest to discerning horror fans of any ethnicity, and thus were quickly relegated to the three for two bins at chain video stores. The trend continued, and although many of the films that followed were actually made by blacks, these productions were rarely any more competent or engaging.

We can only guess where the first wave of black horror films would have gone had they been given a fighting chance. Some of the films that followed would have fared just as poorly as their predecessors, transplanting black actors into already hackneyed scripts. As a whole, the subgenre would

have likely evolved and explored the horror genre like any other culture, bringing to them very distinct idioms. We can see moments of that in some of these early black horror efforts, when the monster shucks off its shock for shock's sake rubber mask and reveals something deeper about its plight, but it is never sufficiently explored. (Except for *Ganja and Hess,* which—despite its cinematic shortcomings—transcends the conventions of the genre.) So, instead of crying over spilled milk, we will simply have to accept these films for what they are—admirable monster movies that did what they could with whatever means at their disposal—and groove on their low rent inner city charms.

Listen to the wisdom of a seven year old horror fan: if movie monsters can't have 'fros and be accompanied by funky theme music, then, really, what's the point?

ALTHOUGH I have made an exhaustive attempt to catalog and review all the productions that could be considered black exploitation horror films made during the seventies, I seriously doubt this list is complete. (The fact that it is classified as a subgenre—even though it is made up of a dozen films that spanned a five year stretch—is a subject worthy of discussion in and of itself.)

Two films often lumped in with the others, but which so far I have been unable to track down to confirm any associations, are Ray Marsh's *Lord Shango* (1975) and Barry Rosen's *Gang Wars* (1976) aka *The Devil's Express.* The former is supposedly a fairly serious and competent movie that

deals with voodoo as a religion, but whether the proceedings are actually supernatural or not remains to be seen by yours truly. (It was released on videocassette under the misleading title of *The Color of Love* by Xenon Entertainment in 1991, but is now long out of print and nearly impossible to track down.) The latter is an exploitation film in every sense of the word—a low budget affair that thrusts a bloodthirsty Chinese demon into the middle of a war between rival street gangs in New York; it features a black lead, but its ties to the subgenre explored here may be tenuous.

Even more elusive is what *may* be a supernatural horror film from the seventies called *The Obsessed One*, but the poster is ambiguous. The first reference I found to it was in the wonderful book on the black film explosion, *What It Is…What It Was!*. [Hyperion Books; 1998], and have since tracked down numerous copies of the one-sheet for sale online. Directed by Ramdjan Abdoelrahman—now a producer for Dutch television—and released by 21st Century Distribution, ads tout "The Bride Finally Died… Her Torture Ended. For Him, it was the Beginning of a Brutal, Savage Trail of Possessed Horror!"

Many other soul cinema historians would have undoubtedly included Cliff Roquemore's *Petey Wheatstraw* (1977) aka *The Devil's Son-in-Law*, but despite the supernatural lynchpins, this film is an *intentional* comedy. (Okay, so maybe it has more right being here than *The Thing with Two Heads*, but since the *only* moment of horror *Petey Wheatstraw* can lay claim to is Rudy Ray Moore accosting some poor kid on the street shouting "I'm gonna comb yo' nappy hair"—which he proceeds to do amidst cries of *real* pain—I had to make a judgment call.) Some cineastes also include the Manuel Caño obscurity *Vudú Sangriento* [Bloody Voodoo] (1973) aka *Voodoo Black Exorcist*, but since this is a Spanish film that does not take place in urban America, I felt its exclusion self evident. Any other oversights are, well, just that.

Before commencing with the reviews, I need to address the inevitable concerns of some readers. Am I qualified to discuss horror and exploitation cinema? Sure. Am I qualified to discuss cinema created largely by and for African Americans? Of course not. I am no more qualified to discuss the black experience than a black person who grew up in urban America can adequately describe growing up white in white suburbia. I am ignorant by default, so all I can do is offer an outsider's perspective of the genre. (I'd like to think that the fact I regularly use no-lye relaxers like Ultra Sheen to

straighten my own nappy hair gives me some insight into their plight, but that would just be wrong.) **ABBY (1974)**

> American International Pictures, Inc. [US] Mid America Pictures [US] DIR: William Brent Girdler PRO: William Brent Girdler, Mike Henry and Gordon Cornell Layne SCR: Gordon Cornell Layne DOP: William L Asman EXP: Samuel Z Arkoff MFX: Joe Kenney SFX: Samuel E Price MUS: Patti Henderson and Robert O Ragland STR: Brice Amos, William P Bradford (aka Bill Bradford), Chuck Broadus, Casey Brown, Terry Carter, Nathan Cook, Michael Coulden, Claude Fulkerson, Bobby Griffin, Don Henderson, Rhodi Hill, Joann Holcomb, Bob Holt, Robin James, Julia James, Felece Kinchelow, Charles Kissinger, Fletchen Kwanstic, William Marshall, John Miller, Mary Minor, Elliott Moffitt, Joanna Moore, Nancy Lee Owens, Joan Ray, George Robinson, Carolyn Stewart (aka Carol Speed), Austin Stoker and Bill Wilson
>
> AKA: *Possess My Soul Seduccion Diabolica* [Diabolic Seduction]
>
> Approximately 89m; Color; Rated R
>
> ADL: “Abby Doesn’t Need a Man Anymore… The Devil is Her Lover Now!”

DR GARNET WILLIAMS (William Marshall), a professor of theology and archeology, decides to do a little excavating in the mother country, and accidentally unleashes the spirit of the African devil god Eshu (Gesundheit). Meanwhile, his daughter in law Abby (Carol Speed née Stewart) and her family move into a new home which, they find out on the night of their house-warming, harbors an unseen force that has it in for their furniture.

Things start getting *really* weird when Abby gets all hot and bothered preparing some poultry for dinner, but—publicly—starts turning heads with her newfound social awkwardness towards her friends and fellow churchgoers. (She throws up all over one parishioner, and another she promises to “take upstairs and fuck the shit out of” in front of the man’s fiancée.) When she isn’t acting like a monkey in heat (that’s not a racial slur, I assure you) or playing merry-go-round with an old cracker with a bad

ticker, she's sleazing her way from one nightclub to the next, her concerned husband, the esteemed Reverend Williams (Terry Carter), always one step behind.

As either horror or exploitation, *Abby* is not a noteworthy effort. The film is, however, notorious for the fact that Warner Brothers sued American International Pictures and director Girdler for copyright infringement. Although not quite the note-for-note remake that many sources claim, *Abby* does bear a marked resemblance to William Friedkin's *The Exorcist*, enough so that the folks at Warner took them to court and forced a cease and desist on any future release of the film. According to the posthumously official William Girdler website www.williamgirdler.com:

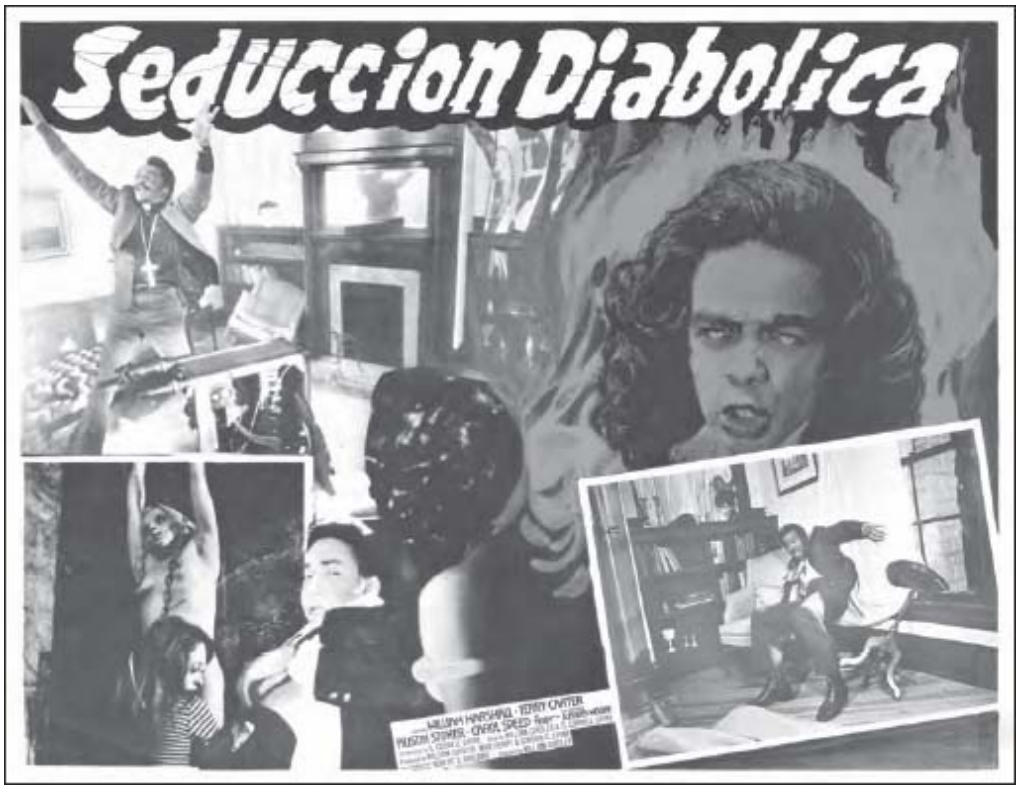
> *Warner Brothers and Sam Arkoff of AIP struck a bargain in which Warner Brothers would release the frozen revenue generated by the film to Girdler and company. In return, Arkoff and Mid America agreed never to air or distribute the film without Warner Brothers' permission. Girdler saw no profits from the film. The case was settled a few weeks before he died.*

Abby—made on $100,000—raked in somewhere between $4-9m during its abbreviated theatrical release in the States, outgrossing *Blacula*. (The total box office receipts differ between sources, and it wasn't unheard of for both AIP and Girdler to exaggerate the profits in order to impress theatres as well as potential investors.)

Abby doesn't need a man anymore...
The Devil is her Lover Now!
Her HUSBAND
Her BROTHER
Her FRIEND
The EXORCIST
Abby
...the story of a woman possessed
WILLIAM MARSHALL · TERRY CARTER · AUSTIN STOKER · CAROL SPEED

US advertisement herald for Abby (1974) American International Pictures, Inc.

Having never been legitimately available on home video, it is no surprise that the lucky few who have actually seen it either caught it during its original theatrical run, or plunked down twenty bucks (or much, *much* more, in some cases) for a washed out, grainy bootleg. (Curiously enough, when MGM Home Entertainment bought the rights to AIP's back catalog for its Midnite Movies line of DVD releases, *Abby* wasn't included in the package.) Unfortunately, this is one of those efforts that is more impressive as a lost film than, well, a found one.



Mexican lobby card for Abby (1974) American International Pictures, Inc./Mid-America Pictures

At the risk of losing my esteemed position as trash film connoisseur (he said, with tongue firmly in cheek), it appears that I may be the only person of this camp who felt cheated by the experience of actually having seen it. Although a reviewer for the *New York Times* called it "an effective and chilling film," I found it laughable. Although *Abby* holds a place in the top twenty list of many trash horror enthusiasts, I wasn't laughing when I should have been.

More to the point, *Abby* makes Italian imports like Alberto de Martino's *L'Antichristo* (1974) and Ovidio Assoniti's *Chi Sei?* (1974) seem palatable. The drama prior to the initial shocks comes across as a string of television commercials stripped of any product references (although one would swear that a sequence used later on in the film was pilfered from a Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints ad spot). Scenes of horror are offered without any build up, and the events seem to leave little if any lasting impression on the players whatsoever. Although *Abby* even goes so far as to copy *The*

Exorcist's Captain Howdy subliminals (here, the demon is portrayed by Speed sporting a bald cap, ugly teeth and *really* big eyebrows), the screenwriters do take the final confrontation between good and evil out of the bedroom and put it where it rightly belongs: in a nightclub.

Speed's performance is embarrassing (me-thinks she may have had a bigger hand in suppressing this film than Warner Brothers, but don't quote me on that), but then again, she had the material and its handling working against her. Marshall (1924–2003) goes through the motions, but then again, who could blame him. (Granted, horror fans will be hard pressed to see him as anything besides Blacula, and since this film is an obvious drop from both that film and its sequel, why make the effort?) Marshall never had a good word to say about this film; although he felt that it didn't delve far enough into African culture (among other legitimate gripes), Speed claims he hated *Abby* "because [her] photo was the one associated with the success of *Abby*" and not his. Stoker (1943–) seems to come out better than the other performers, but then he's sadly underused, so doesn't suffer nearly as many indignations as everyone else involved. Considering the talented cast at the filmmaker's disposal—all of whom deserved far, far better—I just couldn't bring myself to laugh.

When he died in a helicopter crash in the Philippines at the premature age of thirty, director Girdler (1947–78) had nine films to his credit, six of which were horror—the underrated Ed Gein inspired shocker *Three on a Meathook* among them—and three of which were black exploitation efforts, including the fun Pam Grier vehicle *Sheha, Baby* (1975). (He was also responsible for scoring the JG Patterson Jr 1974 Z-grade gore effort, *The Body Shop.* No one who has seen the film, though, will consider it a feather in the cap.) Composer Ragland (1931–) made a career out of scoring B-grade horror fare during the seventies—*The Touch of Satan* (1970), *The Thing with Two Heads* (1973) and *Mansion of the Doomed* (1977) topping the list—but eventually worked his way 'up' to B-grade action films in the decades that followed.

As The Fearmonger, actor Charles Kissinger (1925–91)—who appeared in all but two of Girdler's films—hosted the prime time horror program *Fright Night* (1971–75), which aired Saturday evenings on WDRB TV-41 in Louisville, Kentucky. In addition to playing the resident cannibal in *Three on a Meathook* (1972), he also did the voiceover on several ad spots for the film.

Sadly, the cinematic career of Speed (1945–) barely lasted nine years, which included a supporting role in Jack Hill's women in prison classic *The Big Bird Cage* (1972) and came to a screeching halt when she played opposite Rudy Ray Moore in blaxploitation's last gasp, *The Disco Godfather* (1979). (This film also marked the end of Moore's acting career.) The versatile actress had some success on syndicated television, and even performed one of her own musical compositions for the soundtrack of *Abby.* Not to be usurped by the cast and crew of Friedkin's *The Exorcist,* Speed has claimed that the set of *Abby* was also plagued by inexplicable, thus supernatural, goings on. If only the filmmakers had captured some of this 'bona fide' poltergeist activity on film, *Abby* may have created the ripples it intended.

BLACK THE RIPPER (1974)

> FRSCO/Frisco Productions Ltd [US] DIR: Frank R Saletri PRO: Frank R Saletri SCR: Frank R Saletri STR: Dale E Bach, Pearl Elizabeth Dobbins (aka Liz Renay), Marva Farmer, Renata Harmon, Joe Marsh, Bole Nikoli and Hugh van Patten Running time unknown; Color; Unrated

IT IS STILL unknown whether this film is lost, or if it actually ever reached post production; aside from some rumors of sightings, the only evidence of its existence is from an advertisement that ran in *Variety* magazine in 1974. (Most online sources list the film as 1975, but neither date has been verified to my satisfaction.) Since there is no print available for review purposes, this inclusion will be predictably brief.

I think it is safe for us to assume that the clever title speaks for itself. Three of the actors— Dale E Bach, Pearl Dobbins (née Renay) and Marva Farmer—appeared the previous year in *Blackenstein.* (Although Renay is listed in most credits, when asked about *Black the Ripper* in a recent interview, she insists she was never asked to participate in the project, much less heard of it.) What few credits are available were obtained from online sources (the most complete being from *The Encyclopedia of Fantastic Film & Television),* and from these few credits we know it *must* be a masterpiece of the genre. Why? Because the man singlehandedly responsible for it is none other than Frank R Saletri, the producer-cum-scriptwriter of *Blackenstein.*

So, all of you cinephiles out there reading this, listen up: quit wasting your time trying to unearth a copy of the elusive Lon Chaney vehicle *London After Midnight* (1927) and get cracking on *this* number. If this film does indeed exist, it must be found. Not only will this forgotten treasure change the way we look at black horror fare, it will ensure you a footnote in the annals of film history. C'mon, who remembers Chaney anyway; this is *Black the Ripper* we're talking about here!

Me? I'll be pawing through the basements of forgotten movie houses looking for the Tod Browning film, while you simpletons are looking for a wretched slasher flick that probably doesn't even exist. Hey, I'm the one who has to review the films, after all, so call it an act of self preservation.

How can I make such assumptions about the alleged film's worth, having never even seen Salet-ri's script? Read ahead…

BLACKENSTEIN (1973)

FRSCO/Frisco Productions Ltd [US] DIR: William A Levey PRO: Frank R Saletri SCR: Frank R Saletri DOP: Robert Caramico EXP: Ted Tetrick MFX: Gordon Freed and William Munns SFX: Kenneth Strickfadden MUS: Cardella de Milo and Lou Frohman STR: Dale E Bach, Nick Bolin, Don Brodie, Bob Brophy, Andy C, James Cousar, Cardella de Milo, Joe de Sue, Pearl Elizabeth Dobbins (aka Liz Renay), Marva Farmer, Daniel Fauré, Beverly Haggerty (aka Beverly Hagerty), John Hart, Robert L Hurd, Roosevelt Jackson, Andrea King, Karin Lind, Yvonne Robinson, Gerald Soucie (aka Jerry Soucie) and Ivory Stone

AKA: *(The) Black Frankenstein*

Blackstein

Frankenstein Negro [Black Frankenstein]

Return of Blackenstein

Approximately 87m; Color; Rated R

DVD: *Blackenstein* [Xenon Video; 87m; FS; NTSC R1]

VHS: *Blackenstein* [Media Entertainment; 87m; FS; NTSC] [Xenon Video; 87m; FS; NTSC]

ADL: “Not Since Frankenstein Stalked the Earth has the World Known so Terrifying a Day… or Night”

DR WINIFRED WALKER (Ivory Stone) shows up on the doorstep of her former teacher Dr Stein (who, we are told, won the Nobel Peace Prize for cracking the DNA code), hoping he can help her fiancé, Eddie (Joe de Sue), who lost both of his arms and legs to a landmine in Vietnam. The renowned scientist (John Hart) performs a quick limb transplant then injects the sullen Purple Heart with a heavy dose of DNA (I guess he didn’t have enough of his own); luckily, Eddie doesn’t grow a zebra leg like one of the mad doctor’s other, less fortunate, human guinea pigs. Things are looking up until Winifred rejects the advances of the doctor’s Nubian assistant Malcolm (Roosevelt Jackson), who extols revenge by sabotaging the procedure. Eddie promptly regresses into a throwback with a prominent brow and flattop afro, and goes on the expected killing spree, first going after an abusive male nurse, then any helpless woman who stumbles into his path.

Although a little too slow to make the ranks of the So Bad It’s Great Hall Of Shame, *Blackenstein* is still one doozey of a rotten film that will appeal only to the prurient interests of hardcore trashfiends with whom patience is not an issue. Fettered by bad acting, a lousy script and dime store set pieces (note the hydrogen peroxide bottle with’DNA scrawled in felt marker on its face), this ranks as one of the most inept entries in soul cinema’s horror cycle, vying with Girdler’s *Abby* for the lowest rung. Whereas *Abby* is a tad more competent—especially in respect to the performances—*Blackenstein* proves to be the funnier of the two films if only because one goes in with only the lowest of expectations.

Unable to deliver simple lines—let alone emote—the actors sleepwalk from one scene to the next, and it isn’t hard to imagine them napping on the sidelines when a camera isn’t trained on them. (Eddie and his one-expression-fits-every-occasion delivery implore the viewer to wonder if the poor vet wouldn’t be better off employed as a doorstop, since the landmine apparently did a number on his personality as well.) The script, besides being hack reiteration, is festooned with meaningless, migraine inducing scientific gibberish. Dr Stein’s laboratory looks like something from an Al

Adamson flick, for good reason: what wasn't salvaged from forty year old Universal monster movies was probably purchased from a local novelty shop on clearance. (Strickfadden was responsible for the gadgetry used in the original 1931 version *of Frankenstein* and its sequels, and much of his 'electrifying' props were recycled by such low rent exercises as this and *Dracula vs Frankenstein* [1971] during the early seventies.) Whenever showing the supposedly limbless vet, the effects department thought it unnecessary to conceal the fact that the statuesque actor did indeed have arms and legs, and simply threw a sheet over him. (Really, how hard would it have been to cut holes in the bed or gurney before filming these scenes? As if someone wouldn't *notice* the size fourteen wide tents made by his feet.) The day for night sequences could never be mistaken for anything but that, and the sound engineer apparently pilfered everything he could from the original *Star Trek* sound effects library. Worst of all, the theme song displays not one lick of a wah-wah pedal; no self respecting black exploitation film would be caught dead without a wakka-wakka drenched credits sequence, thus forcing one to question *Blackenstein's* soul cinema appellation.

White or black, you'll scream, too, when you first catch sight of the monster's tragic hair-don't. US pressbook advertisement for Blackenstein (1973) FRSCO/Frisco Productions Ltd.

The movie has a higher sleaze quotient than its peers, at least during the last few reels, with some gratuitous nudity and primitive gore that is just shy of HG Lewis' patented carnage. (Most of the creature's scantily clad victims are eviscerated, and he himself is torn apart by a pack of police dogs, although the aftermath proves to be little more than shots of trained Dobermans picking pieces of liver off the fallen monster's jacket.) Had the laughable excesses been introduced earlier on, *Blackenstein* would have proven more cult worthy. But as it stands, every scene is dragged out twice as long as necessary, and the stretches without dialogue are almost as mind numbing as the droning exchanges one waits anxiously for throughout.

Mexican lobby card for Blackenstein (1973) FRSCO/Frisco Productions Ltd.

Of course, any one of the titles applied to this flick is a misnomer because our resident mad scientist is *not* black. The monster is, but any self respecting horror fan knows the monster was *never* named Frankenstein. So, a better title would have been “Dr Frankenstein’s Black Monster”. But then, this film’s doctor is actually named Stein, and his patchwork creature is not so much black as sepia, but using a color coded system to determine ethnicity may be considered racist, so “Dr Stein’s African American Monster” would be not only be more apropos but also politically correct, methinks. So… screw it. It’s a man made monster with a flattop afro named Blackenstein, so take it or leave it.

Director Levey has to his credit a number of low budget genre efforts, all bad. The lesser of the evils—this, sadly, and the nudie cutie *Wham, Bam, Thank You Spaceman* (1975)—are overshadowed by the likes of *The Happy Hooker goes to Washington* (1977) and his cinematic last gasp *Hellgate* (1989), a production that can only justify its existence by being the one film with enough guts to cast an underappreciated Ron Palillo in the lead. (Being typecast as Horshack in *Welcome Back, Kotter* is enough to disable anyone’s career. But I digress…) Saletri (1928–82) was a criminal lawyer who was murdered gangland style in a mansion he owned that had once belonged to Bela Lugosi. Two of his projects that never got off the ground were screenplays he had written: *Sherlock Holmes in the Adventure of the Golden Vampire*—which was to have starred shock rocker Alice Cooper as Dracula—and *Sherlock Holmes in the Adventures of the Werewolf of the Baskervilles.*

After getting his start on the Ed Wood scripted horror nudie *Orgy of the Dead* (1965), cine-matographer Caramico went on to an illustrious career lensing such Oscar nominees as *Octaman* (1971), *Lemora: A Child’s Tale of the Supernatural* (1973), *Eaten Alive* (1977) and *Spawn of the Sli-this* (1978). Hey, he’s an artist in *my* book.

Co-star Liz Renay née Dobbins (1926–)—exgangster moll and award winning Marilyn Monroe lookalike—has a couple dozen exploitation films to her credit, not the least of which are Ray Dennis Steckler’s *The Thrill Killers* (1964) and John Waters’ *Desperate Living* (1977). In recent years, she appeared in the two latest Steckler abominations, namely *The Corpse Grinders 2* and *Mark of the Astro-Zombies* (both 2000). More than likely, the people behind *Blackenstein* sought only to capitalize on her name, as she is given only a few minutes of screen time, and then just long enough to fill out

a flimsy negligee with her D cups and get eviscerated by our sexually confused monster. Still, she gave it her all… and more. As a publicity stunt, the well endowed actress streaked down Hollywood Boulevard during the opening night of Levey's film. Now *that's* what I call dedication to one's art.

Okay, folks, it's all uphill from here. I promise.

BLACULA (1972)

American International Pictures, Inc. [US] DIR: William Crain PRO: Joseph T Naar SCR: Raymond Koenig and Joan Torres DOP: John M Stevens EXP: Samuel *Z* Arkoff SFX: Roger George MUS: Gene Page and Various Artists SND: Blacula [RCA/ Victor; 33m; LP] [Razor & Tie Records; 33m; CD] STR: Eric Brotherson, Elisha Cook Jr, Ji-Tu Cumbuka, Logan Field, Ted Harris, Ketty Lester, Charles Macaulay, William Marshall, Vonetta McGee, Rick Metzler, Denise Nicholas, Gordon Pinsent, Thalmus Rasulala, Lance Taylor Sr. and Emily Yancy

AKA: *Blacula, Le Vampire Noir* [Blacula, The Black Vampire]

Dracula Negro [Black Dracula]

El Vampiro Negro [The Black Vampire]

De Zwarte Vampier [The Black Vampire]

Approximately 92m; Color; Rated PG

DVD: *Blacula* [MGM Home Entertainment; 93(92)m; WS; NTSC R1]

VHS: *Blacula* [MGM Home Entertainment; 93(92)m; FS; NTSC] [Thorn EMI/HBO Video; 92m; FS; NTSC]

ADL: "He's Black! He's Beautiful! He's Blacula!"

IN 1780, African prince Mamuwalde (William Marshall) makes a social visit to Castle Dracula to implore the Transylvanian Count to put an end to the slave trade. Unfortunately for him, his wife, and subjugated brothers and sisters, Dracula (Charles Macaulay) not only has no desire to free his people

("Slavery has merit, I believe," he says pointedly), he also decides to initiate Mamuwalde into the ranks of the undead. Mockingly dubbing the prince 'Blacula,' he then seals him up in a coffin where he languishes in a secret chamber for over 200 years.

Jump cut to 1972. A couple of opportunistic antique dealers lay their limp wrists on Dracula's estate and unknowingly ship the imprisoned prince to the United States. Freed of his chains (subtle, that), the undead Mamuwalde employs a couple of henchmen and sets up house in Los Angeles. He becomes obsessed with a young woman who is the spitting image of his long dead princess, Luva (Vonetta McGee). And of course, in true lovelorn vampire fashion, nothing will stand in the way of him reclaiming his reincarnated bride, even a savvy doctor (Thalmus Rasulala) who has seen Mamuwalde's, uhm, *dark* side.

US pressbook cover art for Blacula (1972) American International Pictures, Inc.

I absolutely adored this film when I was, oh, about seven, and thirty years later I still find it appealing, although not as I did when I was of a more easily impressionable age. Production values are overall passable, but one gets the impression that the scriptwriters weren't taking any of this very seriously, and that the rest of the crew adapted the self same attitude before all was said and done. Opening with a tacky animated credits sequence that borders on the surreal, we are also treated to some long in-the-tooth vampires that would give their Filipino counterparts a run for their money (good thing the actors weren't required to speak), exploding oil lamps (who the heck needs hand grenades when there's some kerosene handy), and some of the worst dancers this side of American Bandstand (the casting department must have searched far and wide to find the only black people in Hollywood without a lick of soul).

And the dialogue is priceless. When the body of one of Blacula's flamboyant victims disappears from the morgue, a lieutenant detective asks, "Who the hell would want a dead faggot?" (Good thing they only hire the sensitive ones to fill these positions of power.) When the film's hero goes to examine the body of another victim and discovers what appear to be two tiny pinpricks on the neck, the mortician comments on how the "flesh was torn right out in a big chunk."

Undeniably, *Blacula's* one truly saving grace is the presence of William Marshall as the titular bloodsucker, who was a spry fifty years of age when this film was made. Boasting a commanding stage presence not unlike that of James Earl Jones (his imposing 6'5" stature and deep voice only further the comparison), Marshall gives the film a credibility it would otherwise lack. The fact that his portrayal of the sympathetic antihero is in the same vein as *Dark Shadows'* Barnabas Collins only goes to make him more sympathetic in his plight. (It comes as little surprise that Marshall had a hand in developing the background of the character for the film, even though he's not given any credit for changing Blacula from a stereotypical jive talking

brother to an African aristocrat.)

US pre-release advertisement for Blacula (1972) American International Pictures, Inc.

Unfortunately (or fortunately, if you can see the humor in it), Marshall is difficult to take seriously when he is overcome with bloodlust; the term ‘ugly on a stick’ just doesn’t do justice to the bushy eyebrows and even funkier sideburns that complete his vampiric alter ego.

Co-star Rasulala also does an admirable job playing it straight, and keeps Marshall from completely stealing the show.

Although the film never reaches its potential as exceptional horror fare or social commentary, it stands alone. *Blacula* is recognized as the first truly black monster movie, and since no other has given us an icon as powerful as Prince Mamuwalde, the film has become the poster child for the very trend it started. But because no one else could replicate its strengths or repeat its longstanding success in the dog eat dog world of drive-in cinema, this trend soon died.

This film was proclaimed Best Horror Film of 1972 by the Academy of Horror & Sci Fi Films. Despite this honorable achievement, *Blacula* will

forever hold its head in shame for immortalizing—to the horror of future generations unfamiliar with seventies pop culture—the largest collar ever to grace a pink polyester shirt.

Crain spent much of his time helming episodes of such televised crime dramas as *The Mod Squad* (1968–73), *S.W.A.T.* (1975–76) and *Starsky and Hutch* (1975–79). Star Marshall (1924–2003), who was trained as a Shakespearean stage actor, had a sporadic film career from 1952 to 1996. His longest stint was playing the King of Cartoons on Pee-Wee's *Playhouse* (1986–90). The *Sunday Times* once hailed Marshall as "the best Othello of our time," which shouldn't surprise anyone in the least. Co-star Rasulala had a few other notable black exploitation films to his credit, including the Pam Grier offerings *Bucktown* and *Friday Foster* (both 1975). (In the former, he played a heavy opposite Fred Williamson, and the two of them got to duke it out in one of the best, most realistically choreographed fight scenes to be found in a low budget crime flick.) Prior to her regular appearances in *Cagney & Lacey* (1982–88) and *L.A. Law* (1986–94), Mc-Gee (1940–) also appeared in *Shaft in Africa* and *Detroit 9000* (both 1973). Having appeared in such classic film noir efforts as *The Maltese Falcon* (1941), lovable character actor Cook (1903–95) graced with his twitchy presence such shockers as *Voodoo Island* (1957) and *House on Haunted Hill* (1959).

EL VAMPIRO NEGRO
("BLACULA")
¡Mas mortal que Dracula!
¡AL CAER LA NOCHE BUSCA COMO SATISFACER SUS MORTALES APETITOS!
MAINTAIN 30°F TEMP.

Mexican lobby card for Blacula (1972) Warner Brothers

And let's not forget the groovy soundtrack by Page (1939–98), which was thankfully saved from obscurity when it was re-issued on CD in 1998. (Also included in the mix are three numbers written and produced by The Hues Corporation.) If early seventies action movie style funk is your bag, this score comes highly recommended by yours truly.

Some lucky theatregoers were given a Vampire Protection Kit: a printed envelope containing an informative insert and a baggie of dried leaves from the "Transylvanian Bat-Laurel tree", which one is instructed to "thumbtack over your door or window" or "wear it on your breast pocket" so that "no one but you and Blacula will know that you are being protected". No, Virginia, there is no Transylvanian Bat-Laurel tree, so I guess patrons were just shit out of luck.

US soundtrack LP for Blacula (1972) RCA/Victor Records #LSP-4806

Dr Black, Mr Hyde (1975)

Dimension Pictures [US] Hyde Productions [US] DIR: William Crain PRO: Charles Walker SCR: Larry le Bron DOP: Tak Fujimoto EXP: Manfred Bernhard MFX: Stan Winston SFX: Harry Wollman MUS: Johnny Pate STR: Marc Alaimo, Roma Alvarez, Judith Angeline, Bobby Angelle, Gregory Awoskia, Manfred Bernhard, Buff Brady, Wilson Bryant III, Bernard Terry Casey (aka Bernie Casey), Rosalind Cash, Angel Colbert, Ji-Tu Cumbuka, Cora Lee Day, Janet Dey, Stu Gilliam, Shirley Harding, LaVerne Jackson, Gwyn Karon, Milt Kogan, Sam Laws, Joy Lee, Val Loring, Virginia Lynne, Gene Massey, Nancy Middleton, Bob Minor, Sam Nudell, Marie O'Henry, Joseph W Reynolds, Adrian Ricard, Elizabeth Robinson, Phillip Roye, Pamela Serpe, Daniel Spelling, Rai Tasco, Della Thomas, Kejo Thomas and Erik Washington

AKA: *Decision for Doom*

Dr Black and Mr Hyde

Dr Black and Mr White

El Demonio Negro [The Black Demon]

Das Monster von London [The Monster of London]

The *Watts Monster*

Approximately 87m; Color; Rated R

VHS: *Dr Black, Mr Hyde* [United Home Video; 88(87)m; FS; NTSC] [VCI Home Video; 88(87)m; FS; NTSC]

ADL: “A Monster He Can’t Control… Has Taken Over His Very Soul!”

DRIVEN BY the death of his mother, a maid at a brothel who succumbed to liver damage, award winning scientist Dr Henry Pride (Bernie Casey) has developed a serum with remarkable regenerative qualities. Still in the experimental stages, Pride tries out his elixir on a black mouse, which immediately sheds its pigmentation and takes out its frustration on its fellow lab rats. A patient on the critical list becomes the next guinea pig— much to the chagrin of the doctor’s main squeeze Dr Worth (Rosalind Cash)—and gives new meaning to the word ‘spook’ before cashing in her chips. Not wanting to risk any more lives, Pride takes a whack at his new wonder drug, living up to the endearingly contrived title and taking out his repressed anger on the prostitutes whom he blames for the death of his alcoholic mother.

Dr Black, Mr Hyde is one of the slicker black exploitation horror efforts, and boasts some exceptional performances. As William Marshall did for *Blacula,* Bernie Casey does for *Dr Black, Mr Hyde:* the lead actor brings a level of respectability to the material that might otherwise be absent, and instills in the character much needed pathos. But not unlike *Blacula,* the viewer can’t help but feel that these performers are being reduced in some way by their participation. (Mr Hyde’s makeup isn’t nearly as silly looking as Dracula’s Nubian peer, but he also isn’t nearly as intimidating. Maybe it’s the partially frosted afro, I don’t know.) Interestingly, the combination of prosthetics coupled with Casey’s performance as Hyde reminds one of Howard Sherman’s portrayal of zombie mascot Bub in George Romero’s *Day of the Dead* (1985). His cries of rage and confusion are those of a

problematic child, and one expects him to start drooling profusely during his tantrums.

VHS box art for Dr. Black, Mr. Hyde (Circa 1985) United Home Video #6201

Since *Blacula* fell somewhat short as social commentary, director Crain does his best to make up for his previous oversight. Unfortunately, he and his cohorts overcompensate in their efforts. The racial issues prove to be far too heavy handed at times, as the very crux of the film will attest. Furthermore, their depictions of ‘model’ African Americans are often just as two dimensional as the stereotypical pitfalls they strive to avoid. (Naming the doctors Pride and Worth are only two of the not very subtle touches used to elevate the characters.) Had they chosen a more humanistic approach—as was applied in Crain’s previous film—the messages in *Dr Black, Mr Hyde* wouldn’t be so easy to write off at times. Unfortunately, such balances are difficult to achieve, especially within the context of an exploitation film.

Handling of politics aside, this flick is not without its grievances. Sure, science is rarely an issue in such creature features, but no one makes any attempt to explain why the Hyde-juice turns people white as a sheet and gives them a Nean-derthalian brow. But that's okay, because we— the viewers—can accept this as yet another of life's mysteries; it's better they leave it vague than bog down the script with even *more* bad science. What we *cannot* accept is that everyone— black or white—who gets up close and personal with Dr Pride's pissy alter ego mistakes him for Caucasian. I'm sorry, but white greasepaint and bleached contact lenses make him look no more like a honky than shoe polish would make yours truly look like a brother.

Dr Black, Mr Hyde has a low sleaze quotient considering the R rating. There is some nudity, but it is hardly gratuitous, and there is no gore to speak of. Shocks are few, but a scene involving an old woman who is subjected to the doctor's experiments is somewhat unnerving. (If only they had gotten *her* to run around in makeup, attacking the populace, the film may have been able to dish up some real scares.) And in a scene that almost seems to be a nod to *Blackenstein,* authorities once again try to take down the monster with police dogs; whereas Stein's patchwork creation was conveniently disassembled by the Dobermans, Mr Hyde makes short work of the German Shepherd sent after him. (The film follows this up with an almost surreal pastiche of *King Kong's* tragic finale, and has Hyde face off a slew of officers from the top of a Gaudí-esque interpretation of the Empire State Building.) Star Bernie Casey (1939–) was a former pro football player (1961–68) whose screen debut was *Guns of the Magnificent Seven* in 1969. Aside from *Dr Black, Mr Hyde,* his only real genre credits are two made for television horror flicks, *Gargoyles* (1972) (in which he also spent considerable time in Stan Winston's makeup chair) and *It Happened at Lakewood Manor* (1977) aka *Ants!* He is currently the Chairman of the Board of Trustees at the Savannah College of Art and Design. Co-star Cash (1938–95) probably had a feeling of déjà vu whilst on the set of *Dr Black, Mr Hyde* as she fought a whole cadre of melanin deficient African Americans in the big budget exploitation film *The Omega Man* (1971), which put something of a racial spin on Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend.* Fujimoto, now a highly respected cinematographer in Hollywood, got his start in exploitation flicks during the mid seventies, most notably with such

Corman produced cult flicks as *Caged Heat* (1974) and *Death Race 2000* (1975).

I don't think this is quite what Robert Louis Stevenson had in mind, but who are we to judge?

GANJA AND HESS (1972)

Kelly Jordan Enterprises, Inc. [US] DIR: William Gunn Jr (aka Bill Gunn) DIR: Efim Novikov (aka Fima Noveck, aka FH Noveck) PRO: Chiz Schultz SCR: William Gunn Jr (aka Bill Gunn) DOP: James E Hinton EXP: Jack Jordan and Quentin Kelly MUS: Sam Waymon STR: Betty Barney, Marlene Clark, Enrico Fales, Tara Fields, William Gunn Jr (aka Bill Gunn), Richard Harrow, John Hoffmeister, Leonard Jackson, Duane L Jones, Mabel King, Tommy Lane, Candece Tarpley, Betsy Thurman, Sam Waymon and the congregation of the Evangel Revivaltime Church

AKA: *Black Evil*

Black Vampire

Blackout: The Moment of Terror

Blood Couple

Double Possession

Vampires of Harlem

Approximately 110m; Color; R

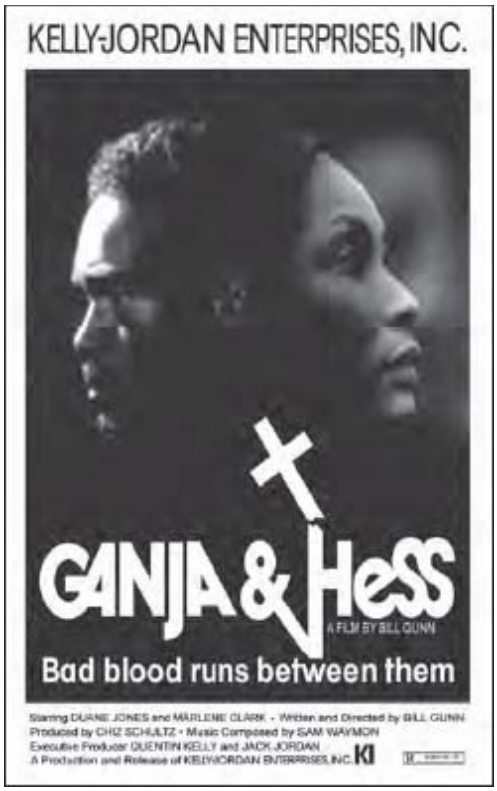
DVD: *Ganja & Hess* [All Day Entertainment; 110m; WS; NTSC R1]

VHS: *Black Evil* [Lettuce Entertainment; 78m; NTSC] *Black Vampire* [Impulse Productions; 78m; NTSC] *Blackout: The Moment of Terror* [Fantasy Video; 92(78)m; NTSC] *Blood Couple* [United American Video; 78m; NTSC] [Video Gems; 78m; NTSC]

ADL: “Some Marriages are made in Heaven. Others are made in Hell.”

DR HESS GREEN (Duane Jones), a wealthy and highly respected anthropologist, comes to be in possession of an ancient dagger while studying the ancient civilization of Myrthia in Africa. His new research assistant, George ‘I’m neurotic, okay?’ Meda (Bill Gunn), goes ape shit one evening while staying over and tries to axe his boss in his sleep. During the scuffle, Meda stabs his host—presumably to death—with the ‘diseased’ pigsticker before taking his own life with a gun. Dr Green curiously survives the attack, but finds himself stricken with an unexpected thirst and wastes little time in lapping his guest’s blood off the bathroom floor. Unfulfilled by the handy packets of red stuff he is later forced to pilfer from low income clinics, he soon acquires a taste for something a little fresher, conveniently supplied by unwary prostitutes.

In the midst of his newfound bloodlust, Meda’s widow arrives from Amsterdam, having tracked her apparently AWOL hubby to Hess’ doorstep. Unaware of George’s fate, she wastes no time in committing some extracurricular infidelity with the brooding Hess, who has decided he no longer wants to be alone in his affliction. Inevitably, Ganja soon discovers her hubby’s freezer burnt corpse, which Hess has stashed in the basement. After throwing a tantrum, she quickly accepts the loss and decides to marry her presumably psychotic host, unaware that he has plans to initiate her into his world of dependency.


KELLY-JORDAN ENTERPRISES, INC.
GANJA & HESS
A FILM BY BILL GUNN
Bad blood runs between them
Starring DUANE JONES and MARLENE CLARK • Written and Directed by BILL GUNN
Produced by CHIZ SCHULTZ • Music Composed by SAM WAYMON
Executive Producer QUENTIN KELLY and JACK JORDAN
A Production and Release of KELLY-JORDAN ENTERPRISES, INC.

US one-sheet poster art for Ganja and Hess(1973) Kelly-Jordan Enterprises, Inc.

In 1972, Gunn was hired by executive producers Kelly and Jordan to film a black vampire film, hoping to cash in on *Blacula's* success. (Prior to this, Jordan had produced a Swedish film for black audiences called *Georgia, Georgia,* scripted by Maya Angelou. Following *Ganja and Hess,* the only other film they managed to get released was Michael Schultz's hastily made action film *Honeybaby, Honeybaby,* released two years later.) Gunn fulfilled his part of the bargain, and the producers premiered it in New York with much reluctance. In light of its poor reception—due in part to a lack of promotion—Kelly and Jordan pulled the film from theatres after only a week, and hired Novikov (1917–2004) to rework *Ganja and Hess* into something more marketable. Not only does his version run twenty two minutes shorter, it also includes some footage not found in Gunn's cut, all outtakes. Reportedly, the director was so incensed that, during a business meeting that followed the 're-envisioning' of his work, the enraged filmmaker threw a chair out of the producer's window.

This affront was released first as *Blood Couple*—to very little applause—and then again a year later as *Double Possession,* hoping to take advantage of *The Exorcist's* success. It failed to garner an audience its second time out as well. Gunn took his cut of the film to the 1973 Cannes Film Festival, where it received a standing ovation from the audience. Despite the reception, *Ganja and Hess* would soon be pulled from circulation and become the stuff of cinematic legend. Novikov's edit, on the other hand, has remained in the public's discerning eye ever since, thanks to a number of low rent video companies who specialized in the public domain and took advantage of disputes over the film's ownership.

Ganja and Hess is a cult film and hailed as an underground classic by critics usually unreceptive to horror fare. It is without doubt the only black horror film to transcend the subgenre and avoid the conventions inherent in it. Unfortunately, in the eyes of this humble reviewer, *Ganja and Hess* has too many failings to qualify as a masterpiece. A gem in the rough, yes, but not a masterpiece.

Although he made a name for himself as a writer and actor, Gunn was first and foremost an artist, one of tremendous vision and talent. To deny this would be a fool's errand. But herein lies the problem: having a strong vision does not necessarily make one a good filmmaker. His eye for the visual was painterly, and his skills as a writer were unquestionable; his ability to mold them into a cohesive whole, however, was flawed. Like many 'art' films, attempts to reconcile two very different mediums often fail, the end result beingating something exciting by defying conventional cinema, or by making an accessible product that rebukes trends and offers something of lasting importance—are few and far between, as many, like Gunn, are crushed beneath the wheels of the Hollywood machine before they can reach this balance, precarious as it may be.

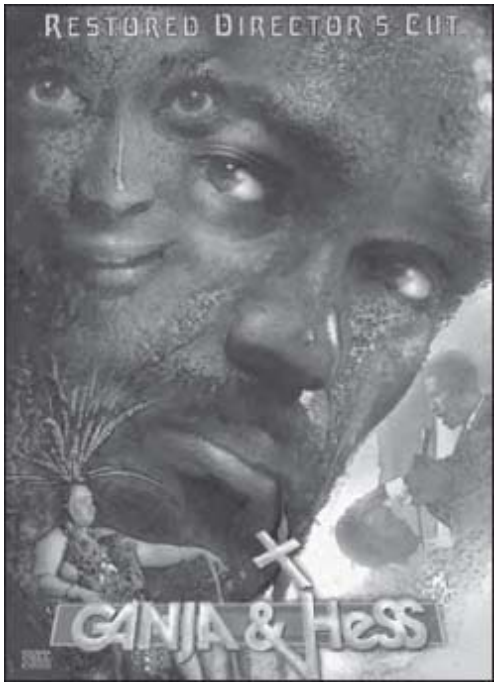
The Devil wanted their souls...
She wanted their bodies ...and more!
DOUBLE POSSESSION
...THE STORY OF A MAN AND WOMAN POSSESSED BY THE DEVIL!
DUANE JONES • MARLENE CLARK • LEONARD JACKSON • MABEL KING
IN COLOR
R RESTRICTED

US pressbook advertisement for the re-release of Ganja and Hess (1974)
Kelly-Jordan Enterprises, Inc.

As a triumph of vision, *Ganja and Hess* succeeds. As a film, it displays flashes of brilliance but is often crushed by the weight of its own aspirations and Gunn's limitations to adapt to this new medium. The filmmakers cause unnecessary confusion from frame one, when we are told—vaguely—of the plight of our main character, presented as if this has already happened and what follows picks up from the already established storyline. Thirty minutes in, we realize that we may now be seeing those events unfold, but there is uncertainty. Discombobulated by the frustrating ambiguities, the viewer is distracted from the meat of the movie—Gunn's innovative take on vampirism and his commentaries on African American culture—and may be too quick to write it off as amateurish. (The fact that so many reviews differ as to what actually happens in the film attests to the dodgy storytelling techniques.) fluous exposition and talking heads; the fact that much of it was improvised is both a boon and a bane. Whereas the ad-libbed dialogue occasionally adds a level of realism not found in staged fare, some of the monologues are awkward and mar what are otherwise intelligent and interesting characters. Furthermore, many scenes are dragged out much longer than is necessary—the exuberant goings on within a Baptist church being the most burdensome—and smack of padding, even though it's obvious that length wasn't an issue with the director.

Aside from vision, the film has a great deal of merit, although it may take repeated viewings to glean all of it. In addition to being thought provoking and subversive, the script is refreshingly original for the time; to my knowledge it is the first film to use vampirism as a metaphor for drug

addiction. (Not once is the word vampire uttered, however, even though it is quickly assumed that the disease is the genesis for the more popularized, traditional bloodsuckers.) *Ganja and Hess* also makes good use of juxtaposing western European iconography with traditional African music and imagery, which in addition to being evocative gives it a cultural and historical context sorely missing in many black films of the time.



DVD box art for Ganja and Hess (1998) All Day Entertainment #98040001

Technically, *Ganja and Hess* is uneven throughout. Although Hinton's cinematography captures an abundance of arresting images (made even more impressive in that this was shot on Super 16 before being blown up to 35mm for the big screen), it is offset by just as many awkward compositions. A professional looking production in most respects, it is also on occasion hampered by shaky camerawork or grainy footage, possibly a byproduct of the hurried shooting schedule. The cast is composed of both veterans and non actors, and all do surprisingly well in light of the questionable, often awkward, improvisation. The music is one of the film's more consistent attributes, although a gospel number played at the beginning, which

reiterates the back story is, well, awkward. Alas, this word of the day best sums up the film's myriad shortcomings.

As far as exploitation, the film bears almost no similarity to the more entertaining fare reviewed in this section. There is some after-the-fact bloodshed, with the gore relegated to a loving close up of Hess sticking a penknife into a prostitute's jugular; the spurting seems a bit watery, but the actual prosthetic used is indistinguishable from real flesh, and consequently disturbing regardless of the consistency of the blood. There is also no shortage of skin, including some full frontal male nudity, something that was rarely seen at the time outside adults only features. Although one would be hard pressed to consider most of it gratuitous, there is a love scene between Ganja and a post nuptial pickup that—like the church sequences— tests the viewer's endurance. The final shot of an unidentified nude man leaping out of a swimming pool and running towards Ganja—one can almost hear the sound of flesh slapping against flesh in his wake—will test viewers in other ways: men, in regards to any anatomically sexual inadequacies they may foster, and women, in regards to any inadequacies their lovers obviously display. Guys, if you watch this film in the presence of the fairer sex, be forewarned that any attempts to fast forward over the final scenes will be met with threats upon one's life and/or manhood.

An Emmy Award winning writer, Gunn (1934–89) only has a few films to his credit as a director, including *Stop!* (1970); unfortunately, this directorial debut was shelved by Warner Brothers and now only exists as a rough cut. His only other genre credit—as an actor—was a role as a police officer in an episode of *The Outer Limits* (1963–65) in 1963. Unfortunately, he passed away of encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) on April 5, 1989, never having had the opportunity to see his film receive a proper release. Duane Jones (1936–88) was of course the star of George A Romero's zombie classic *Night of the Living Dead* (1968). With only a handful of films to his name, it is interesting that two later efforts to feature the talented actor—*Vampires* (1986) and *To Die For* (1989)—are also vampire flicks. Co-star Marlene Clark, whose career as an actress spans thirteen years, is no stranger to horror and exploitation fare, having appeared in *Beware! The Blob, Night of the Cobra Woman* (1972), *The Beast Must Die* (1974), and the nearly forgotten Filipino shocker *Black Mamba* (1974) which proved to be the last horror film starring John Ashley (1934–97). She was once married to actor Billy Dee Williams.

Aside from the occasional showing of Gunn's original cut on 16mm, the film had not been seen in its entirety until All Day Entertainment's so far definitive release on DVD a few years back (now out of print and fetching a princely sum on the collector's market). Uncut and restored from the original elements, it also features commentary from numerous crew members as well as actress Clark. Offered are some amusing anecdotes (including the day long cleansing of evil spirits from the house in which they filmed prior to shooting) as well as some secondhand insight into the mind of the late director, but it is impossible to listen to without wishing that Gunn and Jones were on hand to do the honors with Clark instead.

When I first saw this film as *Blood Couple* on video, I could see the film's potential even if I was disappointed by the final product. Seeing *Ganja and Hess* a decade later, I can't help but make the same observations, even though they are for different reasons.

The House on Skull Mountain (1974)

> Chocolate Chip [US] Film Fund Enterprises, Inc. [US] Pinto Productions [US] DIR: Ronald Honthaner PRO: Ray Storey SCR: Mildred Pares DOP: Monroe P Askins EXP: Joe R Hartsfield MUS: Jerrold Immel STR: Ray Bonner, Xernona Clayton, Don Devendorf, Jean Durand, Michael Jonas Evans (aka Mike Evans), Victor French, OJ Harris, Leroy Johnson, Dennis Lehane, Jo Marie, Mary J Todd McKenzie, Janee Michelle, Lloyd Nelson and Ella Woods
>
> AKA: *La Casa de la Calavera* [The House of the Skull] Approximately 89m; Color; Rated PG
>
> VHS: *The House on Skull Mountain* [CBS/Fox Video; 85m; FS; NTSC]
>
> ADL: "Every Room is a Living Tomb in…"

ON HER DEATHBED, the elderly Christophe summons her surviving relatives to her house on, well, you know. The letters are a little late on getting to her heirs, though, as they all arrive the day she's buried. Curiously, one of the relatives, Dr Andrew Cunningham (Victor French), is very much

white and adamant in finding out about his “nigger in the woodpile” heritage. Before anyone can start reaping the benefits of their shared inheritance, the last of the Christophe bloodline begins succumbing to a vague curse. (The first of those to fall plummets to his death down an open elevator shaft while three sheets to the wind, so no one pays the death much mind. After seeing an apparition in her bathroom mirror, the second has a run in with a rattlesnake, which makes people start wondering if they really are accidents.) Our resident cracker eventually discovers that some good old fashioned voodoo is behind the old house shenanigans, and is determined to save the last of his kin, Lorena (Janee Michelle), a distant cousin who—like him—has come down with a case of jungle fever.

Despite some decent production values, *The House on Skull Mountain* is a mostly forgettable supernatural potboiler encumbered by a paint by numbers script and indifferent direction. The house itself is little more than an unimpressive matt painting, and what should have been the film’s high point—old woman Christophe coming back as a zombie in a sullied dress—is rather disappointing. It does, however, capture what has to be the noisiest faux voodoo ceremony ever captured on film.

Mexican window card for *The House on Skull Mountain* (1974) Telefilms Internacional, S.A.

The House on Skull Mountain also tests the viewer's suspension of disbelief on levels rivaled only by *Ripley's Believe It or Not!* Not only are we asked to soberly accept that Dr Cunningham is only a few generations removed from a very black family, but we are also supposed to believe that Michelle would fall head over heels for him. Even taking his newfound wealth into consideration, this is just too much to buy, even in the context of a silly supernatural horror film.

Whether approached as horror or black exploitation, *The House on Skull Mountain* does nothing to further either of the respective genres, and is largely regarded as a peripheral, unsuccessful attempt to merge the two. Not that there aren't ample opportunities for legitimate scares, or to address issues that—being properly exploited—would have made it a worthy entry. Voodoo has fostered a rich cinematic heritage, something even many lesser screenwriters have used to good effect. As far as exploring racial themes, a good screenwriter would have gotten much mileage out of Cunninghams background, but here it is written off as a curiosity, evidence that the producers simply wanted a white hero to carry the story through to its conclusion. A good screenwriter would also have delved into the interracial relationship between the film's stars, but here it is nothing more than the romantic prerequisite, which—at best—seems to be Cunningham's only impetus to stick around and see things through. In light of the vapid handling of promising material, it is no wonder nobody gives the film a second look.

To my knowledge, this is the only film helmed by director Honthaner, who spent most of his Hollywood career playing assistant to others: editors, producers, etc. (I'd say 'frittered' instead of 'spent,' but *The House on Skull Mountain* offers very little evidence that he would have ever produced anything noteworthy on his own.) Aside from this, his greatest contribution to the horror genre was playing a cop who got offed by *The Hideous Sun Demon* in 1959. Since *The House on Skull Mountain* smacks of made for television fare, it should come as no surprise that the feather in his cap was as associate producer-cum-writer on *Gunsmoke* (1955–75).

Loveable curmudgeon French (1934–89) was best known for such maudlin television fare as *The Little House on the Prairie* (1974–83) and *Highway to Heaven* (1984–89), although anyone with any taste will hold in higher regard his regularity on *Get Smart* (1965–72) and the short-lived sitcom *Carter Country* (1977–79). Michelle appeared in *Scream Blacula Scream* the previous year, and also had a small part in Paul Wendkos'

supernatural shocker *The Mephisto Waltz* (1971). *The House on Skull Mountain* marked the end of her intermittent Hollywood career. Of course, Evans (1949–) is best known as Lionel Jefferson from AH *in the Family* (1971–79) and *The Jeffer-sons* (1975–85), and was the co-creator of *Good Times* (1974–79) **JD's Revenge (1976)**

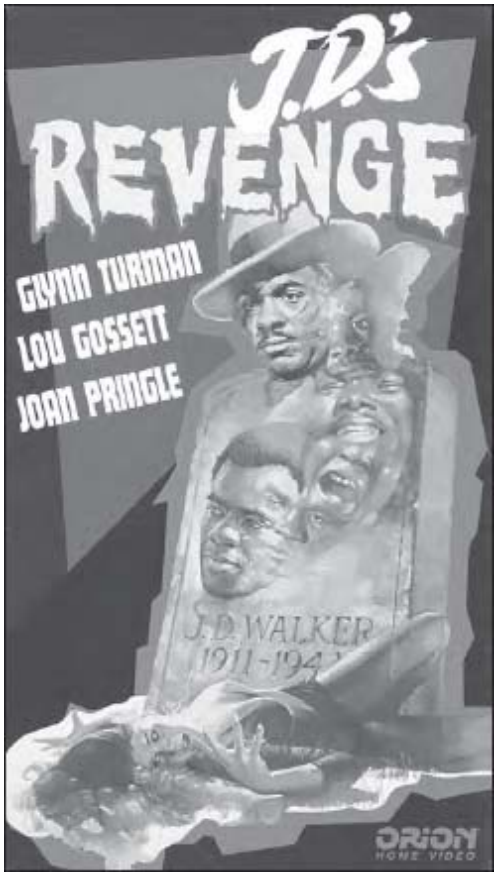
American International Pictures, Inc. [US] DIR: Arthur Marks PRO: Arthur Marks SCR: Jaison Starkes DOP: Harry May SFX: Roy Downey MUS: Robert Prince STR: Tom Alden, Fuddle Bagley, Blue Lu Barker, Melvin Bijou Jr, Earl Billings, Joseph Collins, Carl W Crudup, Danny Dunn, Stephanie Faulkner, Fred Ford, Paul Galloway, Chauncey Leon Gilbert, Louis Gossett Jr (aka Lou Gossett), Alice Jubert, Ruth Kempf, Deonna Lang, David McKnight, Jo Anne Meredith, Bob Minor, Tony Owens, Fred Pinkard, Joan Pringle, Hazel Roberts, Samuel Routh, Rhonda Shear, Barbara Tasker, Timothy Toseborough, Glynn Russell Turman and James Louis Watkins

AKA: The *Reincarnation of JD Walker* Approximately 95m; Color; Rated PG

DVD: *JD's Revenge* [MGM Home Entertainment; 96(95)m; WS; NTSC R1

VHS: *JD's Revenge* [Orion Home Video; 96(95)m; FS; NTSC] [MGM Home Entertainment; 96(95)m; FS; NTSC]

ADL: "He Came Back From the Dead to Possess a Man's Soul, Make Love to His Woman, and Get the Vengeance He Craved!"



VHS box art for J.D.'s Revenge (1980s) Orion Home Video

NEW ORLEANS, 1942. Betty Jo Walker (Alice Jubert), the pregnant wife of a black gangster, is murdered, and her brother JD Walker (David McKnight) is gunned down for the crime. Thirty some years later, a law student, Isaiah (Glynn Turman), has flashbacks of JD's last moments whilst under hypnosis, and the experience has some lasting side effects. Soon thereafter, he loses his libido, becomes an aspirin junkie, and buys a hat from a secondhand clothing store. A doctor tells him to smoke some weed and lay off his studies for a while, but the patient decides to play numbers instead. It becomes apparent he's been possessed by JD's restless spirit, "the craziest nigger you ever did meet", and with the vengeful ghost at the wheel Ike goes after the people responsible for JD's death armed with only a conk and a straight razor.

Aside from some glaring continuity errors, this is arguably the most professional of all the black horror films of the seventies. The script is engaging even if it is a little derivative, and the performances equitable.

Although Glynn Turman steals the show with his disturbing Jekyll-Hyde portrayal of Ike and JD #2, Joan Pringle does a remarkable job of playing his confused and eventually victimized girlfriend. Of course, Louis Gossett Jr as Reverend Elija Bliss—a mobster turned preacher man "pimping God's consciousness"—is no lightweight either, giving depth to a character that might otherwise be a two-dimensional caricature.

As exploitation, *JD's Revenge* doesn't score particularly high, but it's not a slacker, either. The film boasts a lot of tits and a little ass, and there is some nasty bloodletting as well as a great deal of nauseating slaughterhouse footage. The film also includes a rape scene in which the reincarnation of JD forces himself on a character played by the same actress who portrayed his sister in the flashbacks. I'm not sure if the incestuous overtones were intended, or if this is just a frugal casting director's oversight, but either way it gives the proceedings an additionally ugly edge.

Despite the film's dark tone, the powers that be decided to slap on an unrealistic saccharine sweet ending that probably had even the more desperate theatregoers choking on their artificially buttered popcorn. Sure, Ike is cleared of murder, but what about the numerous charges of rape, assault and attempted murder that preceded it? The fact that Ike and his friends laugh off the whole business as the end credits roll is far more tasteless than anything else in the film, even the gratuitous animal carnage.

And what is a seventies film without some of the biggest polyester collars this side of *Saturday Night Fever?* By this time in the seventies, grooving R&B funk had unfortunately made way for clap happy disco, and —alas—the once predominant wah-wah pedal had been all but put out to pasture.

Although a prolific Hollywood and television actor, this was the only horror film to feature Tur-man (1946–). In addition to this, one of his most memorable roles was as Leroy 'Preach' Jackson in Michael Schultz's exceptional urban coming of age film *Cooley High* (1975). It is rumored that Tur-man was originally cast in the role of Han Solo for the first *Star Wars* film, but that George Lucas eventually decided to go with, well, you know who instead. The underused Miss Jubert—her screen credits can be counted on one hand—also had a bit part in *Friday Foster.* For better or worse, Gossett (1936–) pretty much stayed away from horror fare after this.

Director Marks was responsible for a handful of notable blaxploitation efforts, including such cult favorites as *Bucktown, Detroit 9000* and *Friday*

Foster (all 1975). He also functioned as "Executive in Charge of Production" on the Filipino psychotronic flick *Wonder Women* (1973) and, more importantly, as screenwriter on John Peyser's *The Centerfold Girls* (1974), which starred Andrew *(Simon, King of the Witches)* Prine as a sexual psychopath the same year he portrayed one in Alan Rudolph's *Nightmare Circus.*

As mentioned earlier in this book, composer Robert Prince scored the killer worm flick *Squirm* (1976) as well as a host of ingratiating made for television creature features.

JD's Revenge is a worthy entry in the subgenre for which it also proved to be the swansong.

Promotional gross receipts flyer for J.D.'s Revenge (1976) American International Pictures, Inc.

SCREAM BLACULA SCREAM (1973)

American International Pictures, Inc. [US] DIR: Robert Kelljchian (aka Robert Kelljan) PRO: Joseph T Naar SCR: Maurice Jules, Raymond Koenig and Joan Torres DOP: Isidore Mankofsky EXP:

Samuel Z Arkoff SFX: Jack de Bron Jr. MUS: William Marx STR: Arnita Bell, Don Blackman, Michael Conrad, Judith Elliotte, Beverly Gill, Pam Grier, Bernie Hamilton (aka Bernard Hamilton), Robert F Hoy (aka Bob Hoy), Al Jones, James Kingsley, Van Kirksey, Richard Lawson, William Marshall, Eric Mason, Janee Michelle, Bob L Minor, Don Mitchell, Lynn Moody, Craig Nelson, Kenneth O'Brien, James Payne, Barbara Rhoades, Dan Roth, Sybil Scotford, Richard Washington, Arnold Williams and Nicholas Worth

AKA: *Blacula II*

Blacula Lives Again!

Grital Blacula, Grital [Scream! Blacula, Scream!]

The Name is Blacula Scream, Blacula, Scream!

Approximately 95m; Color; Rated PG DVD: *Scream, Blacula, Scream!* [MGM Home Entertainment; 96(95)m; WS; NTSC R1]

VHS: *Scream, Blacula, Scream!* [Filmways Home Video; 96(95)m; NTSC] [MGM Home Entertainment; 96(95)m; NTSC]

ADL: "The Black Prince of Shadows Stalks the Earth Again!"

AN OLD voodoo priestess kicks the bucket, and her son Willis (Richard Lawson) insists that the loa [Haitian god or spirit] should go to him even though she didn't name a successor. It goes to a vote, and the mantle is handed over to Lisa Portier (Pam Grier), whom the old woman saved from the streets. The jilted son retrieves the salvaged bones of Prince Mamuwalde from a dethroned houngan—Ragman (Bernard Hamilton), who also seeks vengeance against the group and revives the gentleman bloodsucker. Suffice to say, Blacula has a profound disinterest in Willis' schemes of petty revenge and getting some use out of his whiny new dogsbody. His love now forever lost to him, Mamuwalde has a new scheme, namely securing Lisa's aid in exorcising the demon responsible for his eternal torment.

He’s back! He’s black! And he’s sporting those same funky sideburns and eyebrows that he did in *Blacula*. In an attempt to outdo the first film, this one offers even more fangs and ‘fros for your sawbuck, and throws some hoodoo high jinks into the mix as well… but is it better?

Scream Blacula Scream is an admirable follow up, but is hampered by many of the self same problems, as well as some new ones. In addition to the director’s knack for going through the motions (some of the sequences are lifted right out of his more inspired Count Yorga films), the script throws logic and continuity to the wind. At one point, Blacula vamps a girl at a party from which he just made his exit minutes before, then allows himself to be seen sneaking out the back door and turning into a bat. Why he didn’t just wait to feast on someone with whom he had no previous contact, or at the very least open a window and make his escape into the night unseen is anyone’s guess. (It’s no wonder this cat never outlives a ninety minute movie.) Shortly thereafter, a police detective insists the girl had been *completely* drained of blood (his emphasis, not mine) even though the young woman still managed to walk downstairs before collapsing in front of the other guests. (The same police officer tries to blame faulty film for crime scene photos that are curiously missing the bloodless victims, so maybe he’s just the stupidest badge wielding cracker to ever walk the face of the earth, I don’t know.) The film does successfully inject some humor into the proceedings. After being vampirized, Willis finds he can’t see his reflection in the mirror and exclaims, ”Hey, look, man… I don’t mind being a vampire and all that shit, but this really ain’t hip!” (Funnier still, due to some production oversights, Blacula’s own reflection can be seen numerous times throughout the film.)

Scream Blacula Scream also offers some creepy moments, although the filmmakers make the mistake of assuming that, just because there is some vampire activity onscreen, the action is inherently interesting. The film also makes a halfhearted attempt to reprise the animated opening credit sequence from *Blacula*, as well as recycle some of its year old footage, but luckily the former is short and sweet and the latter used sparingly. We do get numerous scenes of a cheesy animated bat roaming the city streets, which is only a tad more bearable than the phony rubber numbers that usually proliferate low budget vampire flicks.

Marshall is still as commanding a presence as ever, although Grier appears to be sleepwalking through much of the film. It doesn’t help matters

that the character of Lisa isn't a driven, strong willed, ass kicking she-cat like those found in *Foxy Brown* and *Coffy;* had she been, Grier could have at least faked her way through it. Instead, she's forced to wear the skin of a simpering woman who is spared the depth of her male counterparts. A concerted effort is made to make Mamuwalde even more of an antihero in this outing, leading the way for some of the racial politics that weren't as prevalent in its predecessor. Richard Lawson is fairly amusing in the role of Blacula's untrustworthy sidekick, Willis, but with all the powers at his command, one wonders why he isn't more successful in usurping control.

THE BLACK PRINCE OF SHADOWS STALKS THE EARTH AGAIN!
SCREAM BLACULA SCREAM
PG
William Marshall · Don Mitchell · Pam Grier · MICHAEL CONRAD · BERNIE HAMILTON · RICHARD LAWSON
JOAN TORRES & RAYMOND KOENIG and MAURICE JULES
JOAN TORRES & RAYMOND KOENIG
JOSEPH T. NAAR
BOB KELLIAN
73/211

US lobby card for Scream Blacula Scream (1973) American International Pictures, Inc.

Although there is an ongoing—and often heated—debate as to which Blacula film is superior, this sequel is easily one of the more enjoyable offerings to emerge from the early seventies black monster movie cycle. If you liked the first film, even if only for Marshall's contribution, then I can't see any reason why you wouldn't find this similarly worthwhile. Those

paying the entrance fee just to see Grier, though, will undoubtedly be disappointed.

It seems we have a lot of vampire film veterans working on this sequel. Director Kelljchian (1930–82) was responsible for *Count Yorga, Vampire* (1970) and *The Return of Count Yorga* (1971). Having got his start as an actor in exploitation films during the 1960s, Kelljchian moved on to filmmaking with the seldom seen incest flick *Flesh of My Flesh* (1969) aka *Little Sister.* Following *Scream Blacula Scream,* he concentrated on television until his death in 1982. Having cut their teeth on *Blacula*, the screenwriting trio of Jules, Koenig and Torres share mutual credit here as well. Jules—the only one with another screenplay to his or her credit—also co-wrote Stephanie Rothman's *The Velvet Vampire* (1971). Composer Marx had previously worked with Kelljchian on the Yorga films as well as the Robert Quarry vampire flick *The Deathmaster* (1972). (The composer is also notable for being the son of Harpo of Marx Brothers fame. If you don't know who they are, or worse, don't care, then you lead a sad life indeed.) Lawson (1947–) appeared in the voodoo revenge flick *Sugar Hill* a year later, and starred in the black action film *Black Fist* a year after that. This was the screen debut of Lynn Moody (1950–), a former Playboy bunny who also appeared in Gus Trikonis' *The Evil* (1978). In addition to having been involved with most of AIP's blaxploitation films as either an actor or body double (standing in for the likes of Jim Brown and Fred Williamson), Bob L Minor was the first black member of the Stuntmen's Association of Motion Pictures. If you don't know who Grier (1949–) is, then you've been in a coma for the last thirty odd years. And, yes, you also lead a sad life indeed.

Alas, the publicity campaign for *Scream Blacula Scream* didn't boast anything as nifty as the Vampire Protection Kit. If they had any brains, the promoters would have issued Blacula voodoo dolls, or maybe a Blacula Resurrection Kit, which would include some ash and dried chicken blood. Be honest: wouldn't that get you to go see the film, no matter how bad you thought it might turn out? I thought so.

SUGAR HILL (1974)

> American International Pictures, Inc. [US] DIR: Paul Maslansky PRO: Elliot Schick SCR: Tim Kelly DOP: Robert C Jessup EXP: Samuel Z Arkoff

SFX: Roy L Downey MUS: Dino Fekaris and Nicki Zesses STR: Albert J Baker, J Randall Bell, Marki Bey, Tony Brubaker, Thomas C Carroll, Gary W Chason, Don Pedro Colley, Zara Cully, Roy L Downey, Ed Geldart, Rick Hagood, Judy Hanson, Peter Harrell III, Larry D Johnson, Charles Krohn, Richard Lawson, Walter Price (aka Big Walter Price), Robert Quarry, Betty Anne Rees, Charles P Robinson, Garrett Scales, John E Scarborough and Raymond E Simpson III

AKA: *Die Schwarzen Zombies von Sugar Hill* [The Black Zombies of Sugar Hill]

Sugar Hill: Eine Mörderische Karriere [Sugar Hill: A Murderous Career]

Voodoo Girl

The Zombies of Sugar Hill

Approximately 91m; Color; Rated PG

DVD: *Sugar Hill* [ILC Prime; 88(91)m; FS; PAL R0] [Total Home Entertainment; 88(91)m; FS; PAL R2]

VHS: *Sugar Hill* [Orion Home Video; 91m; NTSC]

ADL: “Meet Sugar Hill and Her Zombie Hit Men—The Mafia has Never Met Anything Like Them!”

WHEN LANGSTON (Larry D Johnson), owner of the hot spot Club Haiti, refuses to sell out for pennies on the dollar to small time gangster Mr Morgan (just Morgan to his friends), he finds himself receiving a fatal beating in his own parking lot. Langston’s fiancée, fashion photographer Diana ‘Sugar’ Hill (Marki Bey), is none too pleased about losing her man and seeks out voodoo priestess Mama Maitresse (Zara Cully) to help her exact some rather unorthodox vengeance against Morgan (Robert Quarry) and his henchman. The two summon Baron Samedi (Don Pedro Colley), who loans them his army of zombies. The musty revenants waste no time in making things right with the murderous gangsters: the first is hacked to

pieces, the next is eaten alive by starving pigs (“Hope they like white trash,” Sugar quips), another stabs himself to death, etc. The only evidence the authorities can scrape up is a cast off pair of slave shackles, circa 1840s, and some moldy dead tissue belonging to one of the attackers. Although the police chief blames stoned hippies for the string of grisly murders, Hill’s ex—police lieutenant Valentine (Richard Lawson)—has a hunch about who and what is responsible.

Meet SUGAR HILL and her ZOMBIE HIT MEN...
—The Mafia has never met anything like them!
Sugar Hill
"SUGAR HILL" Starring MARKI BEY · ROBERT QUARRY · DON PEDRO COLLEY

US advertisement herald for Sugar Hill (1974) American International Pictures, Inc.

From the opening credit sequence, which has a faux voodoo ceremony overdubbed with the sounds of the Originals' Supernatural Voodoo Woman (available from Motown Records, by the way), one can't mistake this for anything but a seventies voodoo flick. Even though this film still shares ties with such no budget classics as Victor Halperin's *White Zombie* (1932), long gone are the haunting poetry and subtle politics of Jacques Tourneur's *I Walked with a Zombie* (1943). *Sugar Hill* is a single minded shocker that takes *Foxy Brown's* revenge motif (which it establishes within the first ten minutes of the film), and trades firearms for Haitian curses and the living dead.

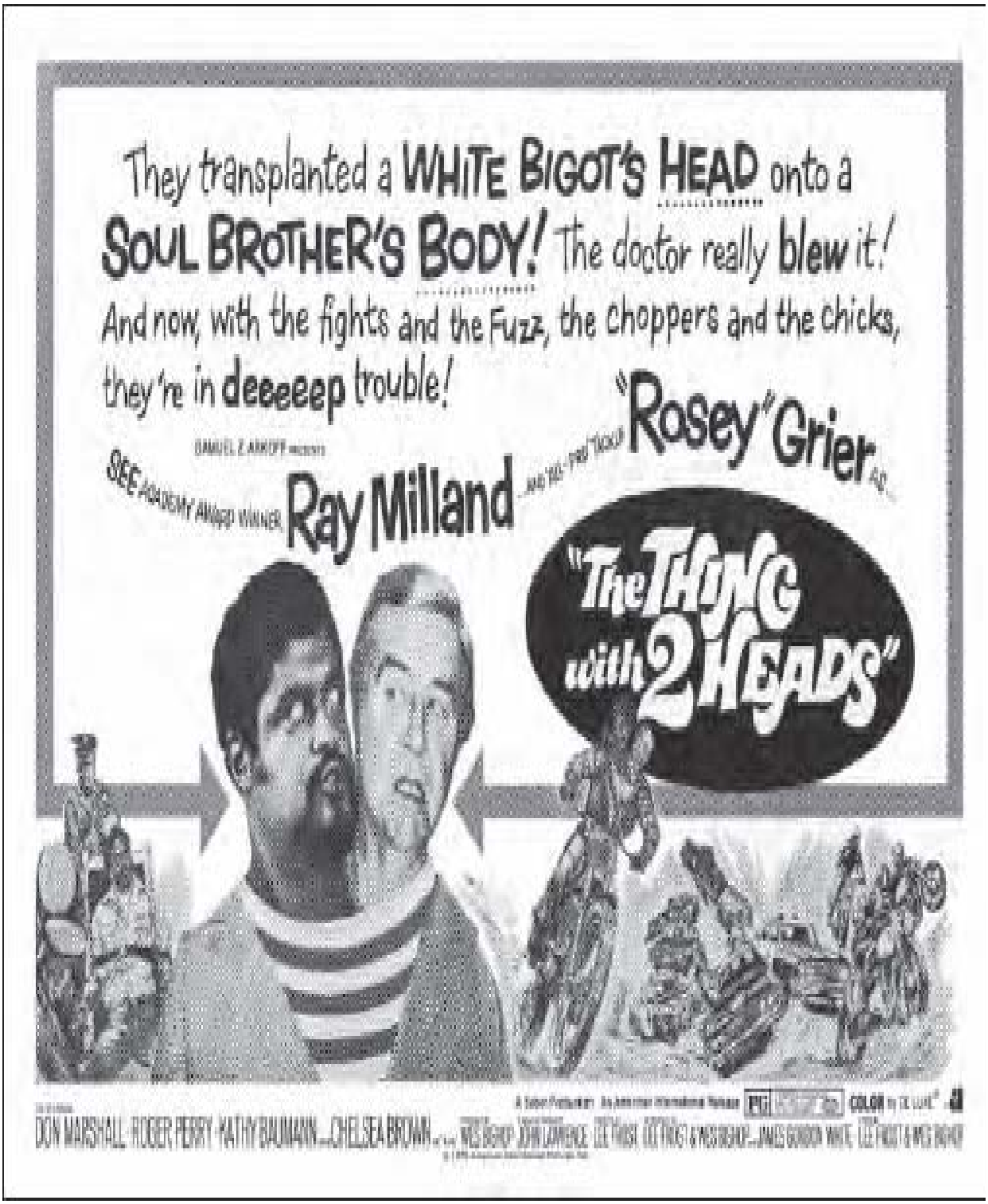
As a supernatural horror film, the film barely rates. As a black crime film, the film doesn't fare much better. As a schlock ridden exploitation flick that wallows in its own contrivances, *Sugar Hill* succeeds. Production values are passable, and the performances more than adequate, but the production would have proven far more effective had some care been taken with the horror film staples. The zombies are ultimately ineffectual, especially after a satisfying sequence of the undead rising from their shallow, unmarked graves. With their silver ping pong ball eyes and poorly applied greasepaint, no amount of fake cobwebs will make them scary, machete or no machete. Although some tension can be found during the final confrontation between Morgan and Sugar's undead minions during the last reel, it's too little too late. (The 1974 episode of *Kolchak, the Night Stalker* 'The Zombie' proved far creepier, and that was made for television, for crying out loud.) The silliest scene, though, is noteworthy for its pure audacity. Every viewer has witnessed someone attacked by a dismembered hand in a horror film; heck, some films, i.e. *The Crawling Hand* (1963), exploit this curious primal fear for all it's worth. If executed properly a scene like this can make for some effective shocks, but to recreate such a scene with a reanimated chicken's foot? Even if you couldn't see the wire awkwardly dragging it around the room, it would be impossible to take very seriously.

Marki Bey is good as Sugar, and although the viewer can't help but picture Grier in the self same role for much of the film, Bey eventually makes the character her own even though she could never hope to measure up. (And, no, I'm not just talking about her cup size, you perverts.) The versatile Lawson plays Miss Hill's concerned ex-hubby Valentine, whose performance is far more subdued than his supporting role in *Scream Blacula Scream* (save for the fact he's sporting a much bigger afro). Quarry—here to

fulfill the last of his contractual obligations for AIP—is good, although it's interesting if not a little off-putting to hear him deliver his lines with a southern fried accent. Last but not least, there's Colley, whose enthusiasm in the part of Baron Samedi is… palpable. Although he looks the part, and has the right spirit for the character, he lays on the theatrics (and the eye shadow) a bit too thick. Such a role would require that the actor gnaw on the scenery a bit, to be sure, but it's tough to take the guy seriously when he's camping it up.

And for those that are interested, there is a catfight between Sugar and Morgan's race baiting, cracker moll. Nothing worth shouting about, but scenes like this do keep the proceedings from getting lackadaisical. Also, kudos to the location manager; even though *Sugar Hill* was shot in Houston, Texas, one would have sworn that it was Louisiana. Of course, I've never been to either state, but it's a nice change of pace from the films that assume the viewer can't tell the difference between upstate New York and, say, the jungles of Asia.

One time director Maslansky (1933–) spent most of his last forty years as a producer. He began his career on such low budget (usually imported) horror fare as *Il Castello dei Morti Vivi* [The Castle of the Living Dead] (1964) aka *Crypt of Horror, La Sorella di Satana* [The Sister of Satan] (1966) aka *The She-Beast*, and *Death-line* (1972) aka *Raw Meat*, but eventually made the big time when he began producing the *Police Academy* films in 1984. Writer Kelly (1931–98) only has a couple of films to his credit, including *Cry of the Banshee* (1970). Effects artist Downey supplied the special effects for such wanting killer bug flicks as *Empire of the Ants* and *It Happened at Lakewood Manor* (both 1977). Besides a stint on *Starsky & Hutch* from 1977 to 1979 playing officer Minnie Kaplan, actress Bey (1946–) had a fairly uneventful career. The underrated Quarry (1925–), of course, is most fondly remembered for his contributions to the horror genre in the early seventies, which include both Count Yorga films as well as *The Deathmaster, Dr Phibes Rises Again* (1972) and *Madhouse* (1974). Colley (1938–) also appeared in notable soul cinema *The Legend of Nigger Charley* (1972) and *Black Caesar* (1973).


They transplanted a WHITE BIGOT'S HEAD onto a
SOUL BROTHER'S BODY! The doctor really blew it!
And now, with the fights and the Fuzz, the choppers and the chicks,
they're in deeeeep trouble!
SEE ACADEMY AWARD WINNER Ray Milland
"Rosey" Grier
"The THING with 2 HEADS"
PG
COLOR
DON MARSHALL · ROGER PERRY · KATHY BAUMANN · CHELSEA BROWN

US pressbook advertisement for The Thing With Two Heads (1972)
American International Pictures, Inc.

THE THING WITH TWO HEADS (1972)

American International Pictures, Inc. [US] Saber Productions [US] DIR: Robert Lee Frost (aka Lee Frost) PRO: Wes Bishop SCR: Wes Bishop, Robert Lee Frost (aka Lee Frost) and James Gordon White DOP: Jack Steely EXP: John Lawrence SFX: Rick Baker, Gail Brown, Thomas R Burman, Pete Peterson, Charles H Scram, Daniel C Striepeke and James Gordon White MUS: David Angel, Porter Jordan, Robert O Ragland and Various Artists STR: Rick Baker, Kathryn Baumann, Wes Bishop, John Bliss, Chelsea Brown, Jerry Butler, George C Carey, Tommy Cook, John Dullaghan, Robert Lee Frost (aka Lee Frost), Roger Gentry, Roosevelt Grier (aka Rosey Grier), Phil Hoover, Jane Kellem, Bruce Kimball, Don Marshall, Raymond Milland, Britt Nilsson, Roger Perry, William Smith, Rod Steele, Michael Viner, Dick Whittington and Albert Zugsmith

AKA: *The Beast with Two Heads The Man with Two Heads*

Approximately 91m; Color; Rated PG

DVD: *The Thing with Two Heads* [MGM Home Entertainment; 91m; WS; NTSC R1; Double billed with The Incredible 2-Headed Transplant]

VHS: The *Thing with Two Heads* [Astral Video; 91m; FS; NTSC]

ADL: “They Transplanted a White Bigot’s Head on a Soul Brother’s Body!”

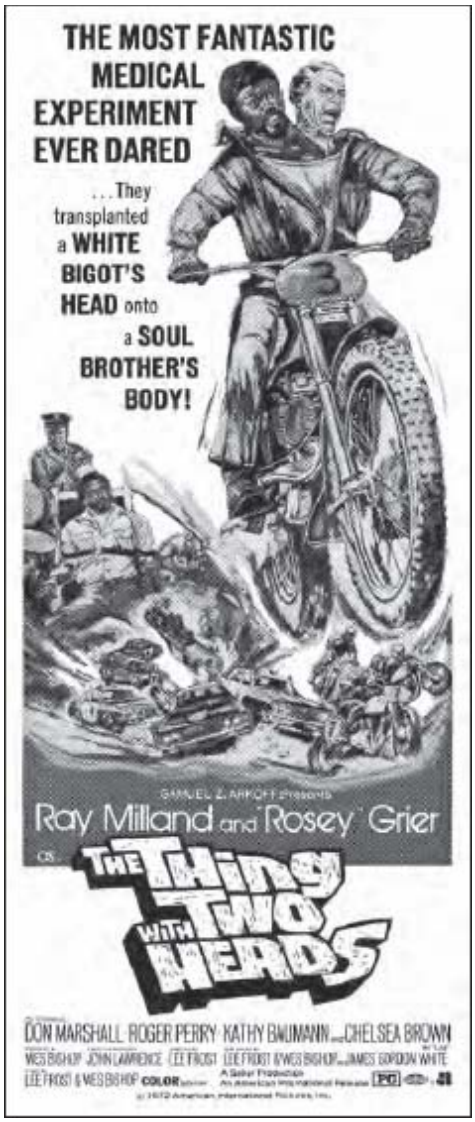
SUFFERING FROM an arthritic condition that has left him debilitated and wheelchair bound, wealthy surgeon Dr Maxwell Kirshner (Raymond Milland) is then diagnosed with a pesky case of terminal chest cancer. He dumps his fortunes into research towards a possible cure: an experimental procedure that will have his head grafted onto the body of a living recipient. Once the body has adapted to the new head, the doctors will then remove the donor’s superfluous noodle, which of course means bad news for the benefactor. A successful test is had with a gorilla, although the two-headed

ape manages to break free before the procedure is finished, giving the confused beast enough time to wreak havoc in a local grocery store. Convinced it will work on a human, the doctor's hired hands begin searching high and low for a suitable donor, but soon find themselves slumming it when they are forced to make the offer to inmates on death row.

As it turns out, the dying tycoon is something of a racist—he fights tooth and nail to break a contract with a new doctor at his hospital because the man is a few shades too mocha for his taste— so it's of little surprise to the viewer that the only willing person who fits the bill sports a much darker tan than what the surgeon had in mind. Innocently charged convict Jack Moss (Rosey Grier) agrees to the hush-hush procedure in order to give his girlfriend an extra thirty days to clear his name; the dying surgeon is unconscious and on life support when the decision is made. Suffice to say, the convicted felon is none too pleased when he wakes up and finds himself rubbing cheeks with the cracker surgeon; he hightails it, the police hot on his trail, with another doctor in tow. ("How'bout you taking old happy face off me here," he asks the practicing surgeon, hoping to be rid of his newfound growth.) Not a black exploitation film in the strictest sense (only a few of the cast members are actually black, and it was obviously intended for a more general drive-in market), *The Thing with Two Heads* should be included because of the racially driven script. Sure, the handling of the material is quite blunt—it rarely rises above such simplistic Hulk-like truisms as "bigotry bad" and "don't judge a book by cover"—but it does seem sincere, which isn't always the case with racially motivated exploitation films helmed primarily by white directors. The material also benefits from the fact that the scriptwriters strive to avoid politically correct two dimensional stereotypes; the good casting only reinforces them.

The Thing with Two Heads is played primarily straight for the first reel; once Grier and Milland start butting heads, the serious issues that were being tackled early on are cast aside for situational comedy. Unlike many films that attempt to mix monsters and mirth, this sucker is actually quite funny when it chooses to be. The extended scene with a post surgery Grier attempting to escape from the makeshift laboratory, Milland's gaping, snoring head hanging limply from his shoulder, is as funny as anything Monty Python ever conceived. When the reluctant two-headed man first confronts Grier's girlfriend, the first words out of her mouth are, "You get into more shit!"

Technically, the film is quite slick, save for some mildly disorientating zooms. (Not quite as headache inducing as those perpetrated by the prolific Jess Franco in his heyday, but obtrusive nonetheless.) The special effects are passable— having had a year to improve upon the cinematic sleight of hand employed in *The Incredible 2-Headed Transplant*—and the scenes involving Milland's stunt head being removed, first from his own body and later from Grier's, are actually somewhat disturbing. Alas, the Milland stunt head affixed to Grier's shoulder during the action scenes looks pretty silly, no matter which angle it is shot from. The film also offers some of Rick Baker's earliest effects work, namely the two-headed gorilla suit (which he also donned for the part), undoubtedly recycled in whole or in part from AIP's first double-headed creature feature.


THE MOST FANTASTIC MEDICAL EXPERIMENT EVER DARED
...They transplanted a WHITE BIGOT'S HEAD onto a SOUL BROTHER'S BODY!
SAMUEL Z. ARKOFF presents
Ray Milland and Rosey Grier
in
THE THING WITH TWO HEADS
DON MARSHALL ROGER PERRY KATHY BAUMANN and CHELSEA BROWN
WES BISHOP JOHN LAWRENCE LEE FROST LEE FROST & WES BISHOP and JAMES GORDON WHITE
LEE FROST & WES BISHOP COLOR
A Sellar Production
An American International Release
PG

US pressbook advertisement for The Thing With Two Heads (1972)
American International Pictures, Inc.

The film is often slapped with a so bad it's good label, and has even been called "the worst film ever made" by hundreds of dilettante film reviewers who probably think the last three *Star Wars* films were a watershed in the art of moving pictures. Without sacrificing the message, *The Thing with Two Heads* offers an intelligent parody of similar fare, wallowing in the absurdity of the conventions whilst recognizing and even respecting the inherent limitations of low budget filmmaking. The film

draws attention to these shortcomings in a humorous fashion, but the actual handling is as competent as one could hope for.

The film's only real shortcoming—even in the context of exploitation—is the extended chase scene with the incompetent authorities in pursuit of our salt 'n' pepper monstrosity. At first, the sight of a dozen or so police cars chasing our spliced duo on a dirt bike across the grassy hillsides of California is not without its amusement, but one soon tires of the *Smokey and the Bandit* style mayhem which substitutes punch lines and pratfalls with car crashes and more car crashes. Preferable would have been more repartee between the unwilling bedfellows, especially considering the wonderful rapport between the two stars.

Many viewers are put off by the film's inability to make up its mind. Despite the serious issues, it could have only been played for laughs once the transplant has taken place. Kirshner's racial attitudes are contemptible; his hatred is deeply rooted in ignorance, and since his prejudices cannot be justified on any level, it is impossible to sympathize with the man or take him seriously. So, like the characters in the film, those viewers who do not share such views can only laugh at Kirshner and the poetic justice with which he has been served. He is a joke and thus should be treated as such.

Thankfully, the scriptwriters avoided what could have been another disastrous mistake by making Milland's bigot a laughing stock. His intolerance is so deeply rooted that the character is—as far as we can see—irredeemable. Had a major studio dealt with the same material, they would have had Kirshner learn his lesson while having to share personal space with Grier, and tear up his KKK membership card at the film's end, a new man. (A plot device previously employed in Mario van Peebles' breakthrough film *The Watermelon Man* in 1970, it quickly became a Hollywood cliché that has been neutered in order to sate an audience insistent on happy endings.) Sure, *The Thing with Two Heads* could have been a more thought provoking film had the filmmakers made Kirshner a more complex character, but this would have thrown off the exploitation film dynamics, and being that this involves a two-headed monster, the suspension of disbelief would make it difficult for anyone to take this film seriously on any level. All of this confusion, I'm guessing, is probably why so many people just don't get it. So, forget what all those idiots online are saying and check it out for yourself.

The late Milland (1907–86) had numerous genre films to his credit throughout the years, including *The Premature Burial* (1962), *Frogs* (1972) and *Terror in the Wax Museum* (1973), but he is probably most remembered as the ultimate peeping tom in *X—The Man with the X-Ray Eyes* (1963). He continued to show up in low rent genre fare up until the time of his death. Grier (1932–)—cousin to actress Pam—has had an extremely colorful career. Once part of the LA Rams' defensive line, The Fearsome Foursome, he retired from NFL football in 1967 due to a torn tendon. Employed as a bodyguard the following year, he become known as one of the two men to thwart Sirhan's attempted assassination of Robert F Kennedy, purportedly by sticking his finger in the end of his gun. In 1968, he made the Billboard Singles Chart as a folk musician with his song People Make The World. Later, he wrote the book *Needlepoint for Men,* and eventually became an ordained minister as well as a spokesperson for the religious right. During the seventies, he kept busy with film and television appearances, and even toured as a comedian. *The Thing with Two Heads* was Rosey's only genre effort. Roger Perry (1933–) only had one other horror film to his credit, *Count Yorga, Vampire* (1970), in which he also played a member of the medical profession. Hardworking Hollywood heavy William Smith (1934–) appeared in *Grave of the Vampire* the same year, and *Invasion of the Bee Girls* the next. His first screen appearance was in *The Ghost of Frankenstein* (1942) as an uncredited child actor. Pretty much the rest of the cast strayed from or outright avoided horror related fare. Their loss.

Of course, director RL Frost (1935–) was one of the most innovative and versatile exploitation filmmakers of the sixties and seventies, second only to Jack Hill. His most notable efforts include the early horror nudie offering *House on Bare Mountain* (1962), the groundbreaking Nazi women in prison flick *Love Camp 7* (1969) and the black exploitation shocker *Black Gestapo* (1975). Lee has a small role in *The Thing with Two Heads* as Sergeant Hacker. Famed exploitation mogul Zugsmith (1910–93) also has a cameo appearance.

YOU DONE THE MAN'S TIME– NOW YOU'RE GONNA DO OURS!
WELCOME HOME BROTHER CHARLES
"WELCOME HOME, BROTHER CHARLES"
IN METROCOLOR
They Tried To Take Everything– Even His Manhood!

The beguiler and the beguiled strike a dramatic pose. Oh, the choices, the choices…
US lobby card for Welcome Home, Brother Charles (1975) Crown International Pictures, Inc.

Along with its predecessor *The Incredible 2-Headed Transplant* (filmed the previous year), *The Thing with Two Heads* has finally been given a decent release, and is available on DVD from MGM's Midnite Movies line of AIP double bills uncut, re-mastered and letterboxed. And to think I used to pooh-pooh the digital revolution.

Welcome Home Brother Charles (1975)

> Bea-Bob Productions [US] DIR: Jamaa-Fanaka PRO: Jamaa-Fanaka SCR: Jamaa-Fanaka DOP: James Babij MUS: William Anderson, Jamaa-Fanaka and Various Artists STR: Ben Bigelow, Charles Brooks III, Jimmy Butler, Jake Carter, Mordo Dana, Jim Dubowy, Lynette Gordon, Jack Gregory, Reatha Grey, Sam Ingraffia, Teri Hayden, Conrad Haywood, Karla Henderson,

Kamala James, Larry Jones, Stan Kamber, James King, Chris Lyon, Elizabeth McAlpine, Al Minniefield, Marlo Monte, Geraldine Marble, Holiday Marble, Tiffany Peters, Donald Pickens, Paul Pizarek, Ed Sander, Carmen Sanford, Stephen Schenck, Terry Simms and Jackie Ziegler

AKA: *Soul Vengeance*

Approximately 98m; Color; Unrated

DVD: *Soul Vengeance* [Xenon Home Video; 91(98) m; FS; NTSC R1]

VHS: *Soul Vengeance* [Xenon Home Video; 91(98) m; FS; NTSC]

ADL: “You Done the Man’s Time—Now You’re Gonna Do Ours!”

MOMENTS AWAY from taking a nosedive off a rooftop, ex-dope pusher Charles recollects the events leading up to his current dilemma. Three years prior, he was sent to prison after getting tangled up in a sting operation and nearly castrated by a racist cop. When he finally gets out of the hoosegow, he finds his wife shacking up with his best friend. Browbeaten, he marries a prostitute and attempts to get on with his life, but discovers that things are different being an ex-con. He catches sight of the officer who mutilated him on the TV and decides that payback’s a bitch. Disguised as a telephone repairman, he gets into the cop’s house and knocks him off after ‘beguiling’ his wife. Next in line are the lawyer and the judge responsible for the unwarranted prison term. But will he be able to administer punishment before some savvy cops catch up with him?

This page and next US Pressbook advertisements for two movie marathons
(1980) American International Pictures, Inc

Sounds like a vengeance-is-mine blue plate special (served cold, natch) with a side order of Fuck the Man. It would be, if it weren't for the clincher. Almost an hour into the film, things start getting a little wiggy when Charles reveals his problem to a doctor. While incarcerated, he discovered that his "penis had grown to frightening limits" and, later, that he could hypnotize members of the opposite sex with his, well, *kaijû eiga* member. Not until the last reel do we actually get to see his secret weapon, and realize he uses his trouser snake to squeeze the life out of his victims.

As if it needs pointing out, this is the most psychotronic of all black exploitation films, and is pretty much in a class by itself, not so much in theme but in its execution. *Welcome Home Brother Charles* isn't quite in the same league as the other monster related film reviews that make up this section, but the inexplicable, supernatural nature of the murders surely garners it a place.

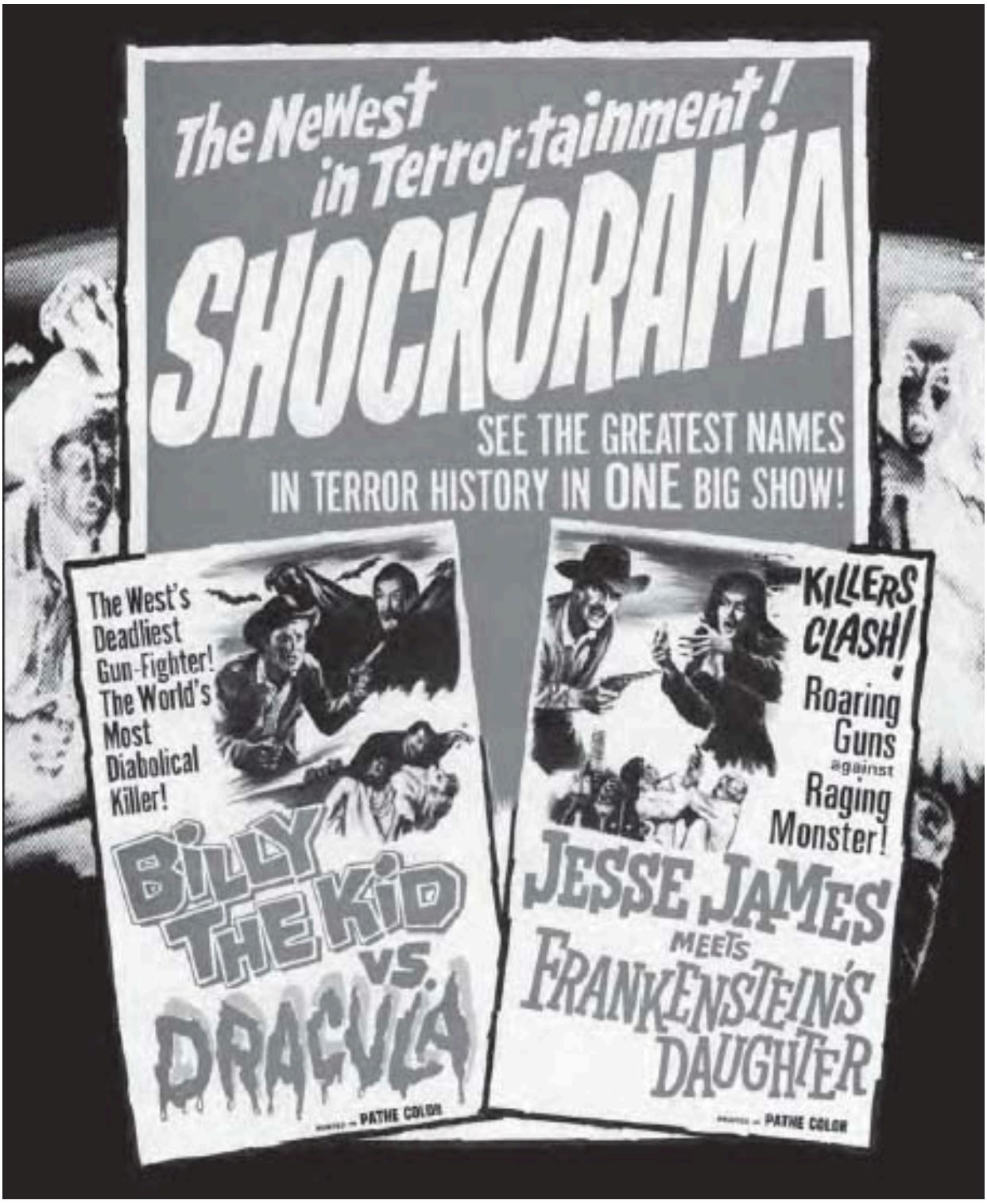
Although society often plays on the stereotype that black men are more than generously endowed, to my knowledge no other film has ever taken the issue of racial penis envy to such a ludicrous, bizarre extreme. As could be expected, it also preys upon white man's fear of black men seducing their wives and girlfriends, but again to a level that could only be construed as satirical. Instead of making the film a farce—seemingly the only logical route—Fanaka plays it straight, offering the unwary viewer a grim portrayal of an ex-con's life throughout. The excellent characterization and some unexpected subplots help to distract from what is essentially a thoroughly laughable premise.

The production values on *Welcome Home Brother Charles* are fairly primitive (looking like it was shot on 16mm and not 35mm), but the homegrown approach actually contributes to the film's grainy realism. The editing leaves much to be desired, although the use of b&w stills to chronicle Charles' jail time is actually quite effective. In spite of its shortcomings and its silly lynchpin, this film proves to be an engaging albeit downbeat drama. As an exploitation film, it falls short of one's expectations, with most of the sex and violence kept off screen. A strange beast, indeed.

Unfortunately, auteur filmmaker Fanaka (1942–) made only six films in his eighteen year career, and is best known for his atypical men in prison film *Penitentiary* (1979) and its two sequels, the second of which co-starred a mohawked bouncer turned struggling actor, born Lawrence Tureaud (1952–), who had already been going by the stage name of Mr T when that

film was made. For most of the performers in *Welcome Home Brother Charles*, this was their one and only film, although Stan Kamber later had a recurring role as Judge Harlan Shubow on *L.A. Law* (1986–94).

Most people paying their admission just to catch sight of the film’s notorious deus ex machina will probably be reaching for their remote before long and fast forwarding through the less sensational preliminaries. Those who are interested in real cinematic curiosities as a whole will probably be in for the long ride.


The NeWest in Terror-tainment!
SHOCKORAMA
SEE THE GREATEST NAMES IN TERROR HISTORY IN ONE BIG SHOW!
The West's Deadliest Gun-Fighter! The World's Most Diabolical Killer!
BILLY THE KID VS. DRACULA
PATHE COLOR
KILLERS CLASH!
Roaring Guns against Raging Monster!
JESSE JAMES MEETS FRANKENSTEIN'S DAUGHTER
PATHE COLOR

US advertisement herald for “Shockorama” double-bill release of Billy the Kid Vs. Dracula and Jesse James Meets Frankenstein’s Daughter (1965) Embassy Pictures

MY LOVE for westerns didn't manifest itself until I was well into my thirties. Granted, I had gained an appreciation for Sergio Leone's films in my teens, but the genre as a whole held little interest for me. As a child, though, there were two exceptions, two films I saw back to back one Sunday afternoon that convinced me cowboy flicks *could* be cool. How? Simple. Throw a monster or two in front of the Old West backdrop, and let them duke it out with the resident cowpokes and gunslingers. Even though these two films did little more than hitch one wagonload of clichés onto another, it was enough to keep a young horror fan like myself enthralled for the entirety of the four hour time slot, including commercials.

These two films from 1966—*Billy the Kid vs Dracula* and *Jesse James Meets Frankenstein's Daughter*—were the last two films directed by the prolific William'One Shot' Beaudine (1892–1970), so named because of his legendary refusal to shoot a second take. It is of little surprise that the man behind these attempts at cinematic gene splicing had already plundered virtually every genre during a career that included over 250 films as a filmmaker. (He celebrated his fifty year anniversary making films while on the set of *Jesse James Meets Frankenstein's Daughter,* this event being used to promote the film further.) At the age of seventeen, Beaudine was given his start in showbusiness functioning as a prop boy for DW Griffith. Within a few years, he began directing two-reelers—mostly comedies—for New York's Biograph Studios, and had moved up to full length features by 1922. Working with the likes of Mary Pickford and WC Fields, Beaudine soon made a name for himself as a formidable Hollywood director, despite the penchant that earned him his nickname. In 1934, he took the opportunity to shoot a series of films in England. Although critical successes, the director would rue the day he accepted these jobs. When he finally returned to the United States, Hollywood—with its short term memory—had simply

forgotten him. Beaudine found himself having to start from square one, accepting offers for quickies from the likes of Monogram and PRC, companies known primarily for poverty row efforts made on the cuff to fill the second half of double bills.

Amongst fans of low budget cinema, Beaudine is best known for these films, which were his bread and butter during the forties. A few of these efforts starred horror legend Bela Lugosi, and marked the actor's descent into B-film cinema as well. Still something of a commodity when he starred in Beaudine's *The Ape Man* (1943) and *Voodoo Man* (1944), films that exploited his image more than his talents, Lugosi was eventually reduced to such bargain basement outings as the same director's *Bela Lugosi Meets a Brooklyn Gorilla* (1952), a horror comedy that featured Martin and Lewis impersonators Duke Mitchell and Sammy Petrillo. This was only a year before the aging morphine addict hooked up with the infamous Edward D Wood Jr and secured trash film notoriety in such Z-grade fare as *Glen or Glenda?* (1953), *Bride of the Monster* (1955), and the posthumous swansong Plan *9 from Outer Space* (1959).

During the 1950s, Beaudine's theatrical films thinned, and he found himself directing episodes for such television series as *Spin and Marty* (1955), *Broken Arrow* (1956–60) and *Lassie* (1954–74). (The latter show was eventually handed over to his son, William Beaudine Jr [1921–], who had previously functioned as assistant director on such genre films as *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* and *Queen of Blood*, 1956 and 1958 respectively.) Beaudine continued plying his trade in this new medium, his last television stint being an episode of *The Green Hornet*, shot only a year before he directed the two gunslingers in question.

Left and right US lobby cards for The Ape Man (1943) and Voodoo Man (1944) Monogram Pictures Corporation

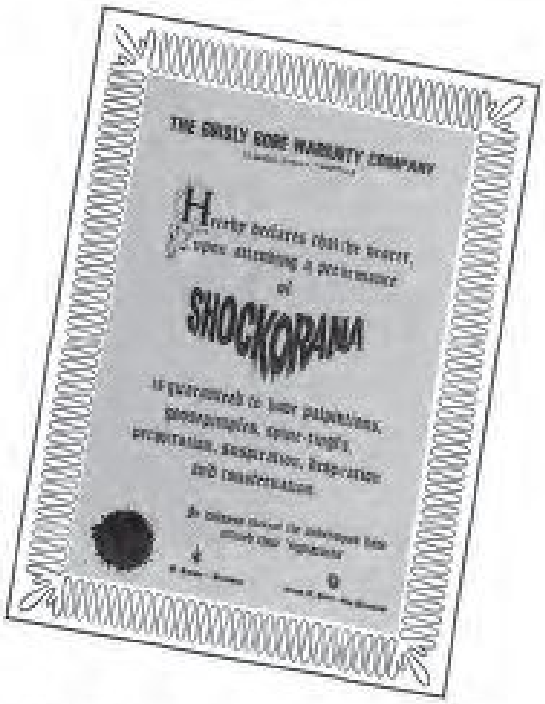
Beaudine's exhaustive catalog of films is just that, and runs the entire gamut from exceptional to downright shoddy. Whereas some of his early efforts are minor classics, his later films are dated affairs displaying threadbare production values, considered bottom of the barrel even in their heyday. Although some of Beaudine's later films are sub par, his last two trash films are adequately competent (at least when compared to the gunslinger pics being produced in the previous decade). Not unlike exploitation film mogul Roger Corman, Beaudine mastered the tools of his trade early on and more often than not could produce a marketable film on the most miniscule of budgets; even productions of the lowest caliber occasionally exceeded their tired scripts and nearly destitute production values.

Beaudine wasn't the first to cross the western and horror genres, but his two attempts were probably the most successful to do so. (The only other American films to do this as well—Mexico had been churning out supernatural westerns for years—were Jacques Marquette's *Teenage Monster* (1957) and Edward Dein's *The Undead* (1959), the latter of which was another gunslinger vs bloodsucker outing that borrowed equally from the respective genres.) As far as cult status is concerned, part of the film's success can be attributed to the inspired billing and subsequent promotion. Most double bills make for awkward bedfellows, but by their very nature Beaudine's films complemented each other perfectly. By capitalizing on the familiarity of Stoker and Shelley's characters (by way of Universal Pictures), this two for one special undoubtedly had every underage horror fan clamoring for tickets. If these boys were also into the cowboys and Indians shtick, then their presence was guaranteed.

Like many of the low budget horror films of the sixties, promotion was vital to the film's theatrical success. In addition to the eye catching 'Shockorama' double billing campaign, Beaudine and the Embassy Pictures marketing department concocted a slew of gimmicks to draw attention to their films. A giveaway that was made available to participating theatres and their patrons from The Grisly Gore Warranty Company (better known as National Screen Service) was a 'warranty' that, "Hereby declares that the

bearer, upon attending a performance of Shockorama, is guaranteed to have palpitations, goose pimples, spine tingles, perspiration, suspiration, desperation and consternation." Theatres were advised to hold 'Coffin Contests' or set up a convenient first aid station that selflessly offered "special assistance to all patrons suffering from shock" after seeing the movie in question. Local retail outlets were also invited to participate by employing any one of a variety of cross promotion tactics in order to drum up business, although whom it would benefit the most is obvious. It was suggested that restaurants serve 'Shocktails' or offer a free cup of coffee to calm the nerves of rattled theatregoers, and that beauty parlors furnish free color treatments to any Shockorama patrons whose hair turned white from fright. The possibilities were endless.

Although the Shockorama campaign was moderately successful, William Beaudine called it quits with these two features. At seventy four years of age, he was the oldest active director working in Hollywood. William 'One Shot' Beaudine passed away four years later, only a few short years before one young boy caught his swansongs on television one Sunday afternoon. Since then, it seems that these films above all his others have secured a place in the hearts of trashfiends who, as children, undoubtedly sat entranced by these rustic horrors, either in front of the silver screen or in the comfort of their own living room. Once, when asked to rush a film (sources conflict as to exactly which quickie it was), Beaudine reportedly quipped,"You mean someone out there is actually *waiting* to see this?" Despite his apprehensions about his later output, it is safe to say not only were some of us waiting to see his films, but have repeatedly gone back for more.

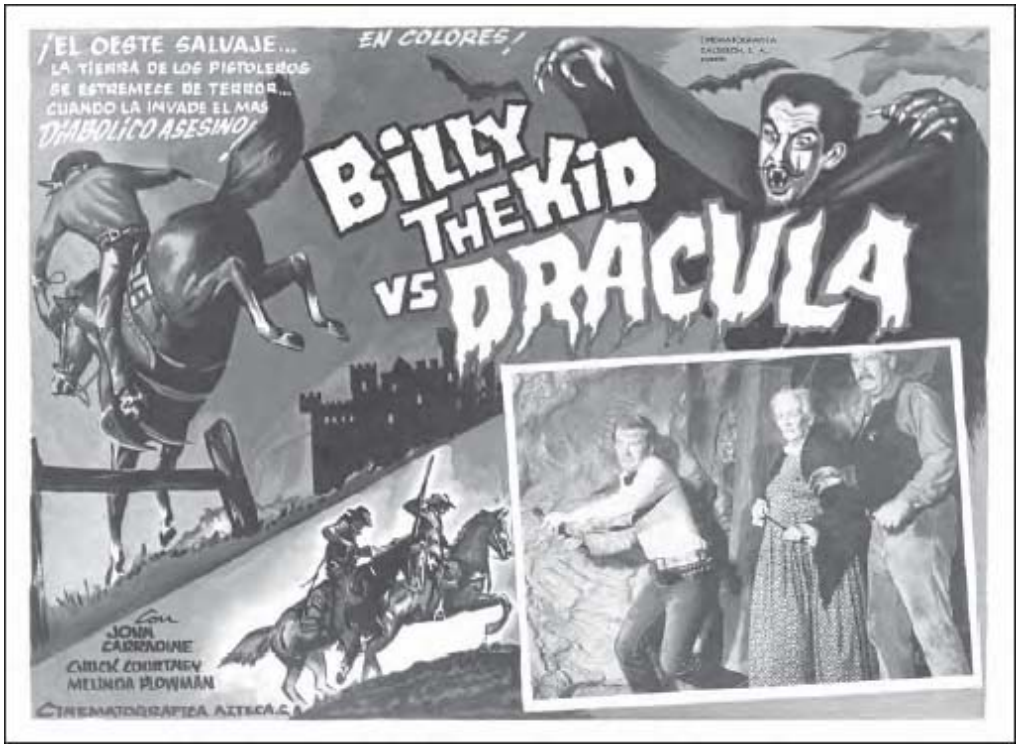


SHOCK WARRANTY

Here's a crowd-stopper that's sure to add extra mileage to your 'Shock-orama' campaign. Available in mat form, this 'warranty' is perfect as a street giveaway or bag stuffer, especially when distributed by an appropriately dressed 'creature type.' It has plenty of room or the back for local merchant tie-ins and theatre name and playdate. Blown-up and mounted, the Shock Warranty makes a most unusual and eye-catching display piece. Order Mat EXP- 4 from:

NATIONAL SCREEN SERVICE

US pressbook description of "Shock Warranty" promotional gimmick for "Shockorama" double-bill release of Billy the Kid Vs. Dracula and Jesse James Meets Frankenstein's Daughter (1965) National Screen Service



Mexican lobby card for Billy the Kid Vs. Dracula (1965) Cinematografica Azteca, S.A.

BILLY THE KID VS DRACULA (1965)

Circle Productions, Inc. [US] DIR: William Beaudine PRO: Carroll Case SCR: Carl K Hittleman DOP: Lothrop B Worth MUS: Dr Samuel Hoffman and Raoul Kraushaar STR: Roy Barcroft, Marjorie Bennett, Harry Carey Jr, Olive Carey, John Carradine, William Challee, Virginia Christine, George Cisar, Chuck Courtney, William Forrest, Leonard P Geer (aka Lennie Geer), Walter Janowitz (aka Walter Janovitz), Max Kleven (aka Max Klevin), Hannie Landman, Melinda Plowman, Richard Reeves, Charlita Roeder, Bing Russell and Jack Williams

Approximately 73m; Color; Unrated VHS: *Billy the Kid vs Dracula* [Embassy Home Entertainment; 72(73)m; FS; NTSC]

ADL: “The World’s Deadliest Gun-Fighter! The World’s Most Diabolical Killer!”

A STAGECOACH picks up an immigrant bloodsucker, and its passengers are taken aback by his devilish appearance. When everyone aboard stops off for a bite to eat, their unexpected guest decides to snack on a local squaw. Not knowing who or what is responsible, the natives decide that it's better to be safe than sorry and attack the stagecoach, killing everyone on board. Everyone, that is, except for the one responsible. Having already made himself scarce, Dracula looks up the daughter of one of the women killed in the massacre, and—posing as the young girl's uncle— makes himself comfortable at the ranch she has now inherited. Unfortunately for him, one of the hired hands—the heiress' boyfriend—is also the infamous Billy the Kid, making an attempt to go straight. Threatening to reveal the stranger's true identity are a couple of superstitious immigrants invited to work and live at the ranch, whose daughter was also killed by the Count.

Having last played the regal bloodsucker in Erle C Kenton's *House of Dracula* (1945), John Carradine reprises the role, now sporting a top hat and Mephistophelean goatee, dressed more for handing out Faustian contracts than tearing open someone's jugular. As every person who has ever reviewed this movie has pointed out, John does look quite feeble, but what truly pains the viewer is his insistence on chewing the scenery instead of taking a more subtle approach. (Worse yet, he spends at least half his screen time fawning over his "young and pretty" niece; even a stage actor like Carradine must have found it a challenge to read what is essentially the same lines over and over again whilst trying to make the delivery sound fresh each time.) Of course, when one takes the script into consideration (undoubtedly written with exclamation marks concluding each and every sentence like the horror comics of yesteryear), one can be forgiving. Especially when the lighting crew illuminates Carradine's face with red filters and lets him do what he does best. Namely, playing the part of a very adequate bogeyman for six year olds.

Like its predecessor, the production values are clean, but with no embarrassing props littering the set this time. The characters are likeable enough, but aside from a crusty doctor (described by someone as "a backwoods female pill swinger,") all of them are too flat to escape their stereotypical mediocrity. The hero and heroine are painfully shallow, and the newly hired hands with their one-size-fits-all European accent could have been struck from any number of films.

More so than *Jesse James Meets Frankenstein's Daughter, Billy the Kid vs Dracula* glamorizes its titular outlaw, turning a homely, bucktoothed murderer into an 'aww, shucks' blond teen who would look more natural playing volleyball on a beach with Annette Funnicello. On the flip side, had the scriptwriters been more historically accurate in their portrayals, their interpretation of Bram Stoker's cinematic progeny would have been a heck of a lot more sympathetic.

The film takes a fair amount of artistic license with its supernatural threat as well, at least in reference to vampirism as previously portrayed onscreen. Here, vampires have no problem with sunlight, and apparently they only sleep during the day because it's more convenient. Curiouser, wolfsbane is the vampire deterrent of choice, not garlic. (Apparently, this mythical relative of monkshood was a lot more prevalent in the south than garlic; even those who don't know anything about botany will realize I'm being facetious.) Curiouser still, bullets have no effect on the undead, but one can easily knock them unconscious by bouncing a pistol off their forehead.

Despite its earnestness, the film can't help but instigate some unintentional laughter. The sad looking rubber bat that Carradine turns into looks even more weathered, more fatigued, more listless than the actor himself; one has to assume it is a supernatural manifestation, otherwise the poor thing couldn't stay aloft of its own accord. Best of all, the character of Mrs Oster is referred to as "Mrs Olson" on numerous occasions during the film, which coincidentally is a character the actress portrayed in a long series of commercials promoting Folger's coffee. And lest we forget yet another bone chilling theremin score; alas, *Jesse James Meets Frankenstein's Daughter* was spared this musical subjugation.

Although most of the cast had spotty or short-lived careers, usually outside the genre, a few of the older, more prolific actors weren't unfamiliar with the genre. The prolific Carradine (1906–88), on the other hand, is known to anyone who has ever watched a trashy horror flick. Of lesser note are Bing Russell (1926–2003), who had uncredited appearances in *Tarantula* (1955) and *The Deadly Mantis* (1957), and later appeared in the made for television shocker *Satan's School for Girls* (1973). He played police officers in all three films. Like Russell, William Forrest (1902–89) appeared sans credit in several fifties sci fi features, including *Flight to Mars* (1951) and *Invaders from Mars* (1953). Unlike Russell, Forrest was usually in a military

uniform. Although uncredited in *The War of the Worlds* (1953) and *The Giant Claw* (1957), George Cisar (1912–79) actually got billing for his participation in *The Werewolf* (1956) and *Attack of the Giant Leeches* (1959). When he wasn't playing cops, he was playing bartenders.

Of particular interest, *Billy the Kid vs Dracula* is the very last film scored by theremin virtuoso Dr Samuel Hoffman (1904–67), whose credits include *It Came from Outer Space* (1953), *The Mad Magician* (1954) and *The Outer Limits* (1963–65). (Sure, I give the theremin a hard time, but admitting that I find the damnable thing pleasing to the ear is unthinkable.) Curiously, *Billy the Kid vs Dracula* was not given the same treatment as *Jesse James Meets Frankenstein's Daughter* when it was finally released by MGM on DVD a few years back. Since the only sightings of *Billy the Kid vs Dracula* since Embassy released it on videocassette in the early nineties have been through public domain outfits, one would assume that it was a matter of rights, but why one and not the other is a complete mystery.

JESSE JAMES MEETS FRANKENSTEIN'S DAUGHTER (1965)

Circle Productions, Inc. [US] DIR: William Beaudine PRO: Carroll Case SCR: Cal K Hittleman DOP: Lothrop B Worth MUS: Raoul Kraushaar STR: Rayford Barnes, Earl C Craver (aka Cal Bolder), Roger Creed, Jim Davis, William Fawcett, István Gyergyai (aka Steven Geray), John Lupton, Mark Norton, Narda Onyx, Nestor Caetano Paiva, Estelita Rodriguez, Paul Slattery, Fred Stromsoe, Felipe Turish, Rosa Turich and Dan White

AKA: *Jesse James Meets Frankenstein*

Jesse James vs la Hija de Frankenstein [Jesse James vs the Daughter of Frankenstein]

Approximately 88m; Color; Unrated

DVD: *Jesse James Meets Frankenstein's Daughter* [Alpha Video; 88(83)m; FS; NTSC R0] [Elite Entertainment; 88m; WS; NTSC R1] [MGM/UA Home Video; 88m; FS; NTSC R1]

VHS: *Jesse James Meets Frankenstein's Daughter* [MGM/UA Home Video; 88m; FS; NTSC]

ADL: "Roaring Guns Against Raging Monster!"

FRANKENSTEIN'S GRANDCHILDREN, Maria (Narda Onyx) and Rudolf (István Gyergyai), have set up shop in an abandoned monastery overlooking a quaint little Mexican village called Mission, dragging with them the last artificial brain produced by their late grandfather. The locals head for the hills—quite literally— after several children mysteriously die from what they are told is a fatal disease, leaving no one to supply the mad scientists with their necessary specimens.

Meanwhile, the remnants of Jesse James' outfit (namely, JJ and his muscle bound sidekick Hank Tracy) hook up with the Wild Bunch in order to knock over a stagecoach to the tune of $100,000 split five ways. Thanks to a Judas among them, the outlaws are ambushed, and Hank (Cal Bolder) is wounded. With the marshall in pursuit and his oversized sidekick in tow, Jesse (John Lupton) makes his way to Mission, aided by a razor tongued señorita named Juanita (Estelita Rodriguez). In a last ditch attempt to save Hank's life, Jesse drags his wounded butt up to the Frankenstein's chop shop, unaware of just how desperate Maria is for human guinea pigs.

Mexican lobby card for *Jesse James Meets Frankenstein's Daughter* (1965)
Cinematografica Azteca, S.A.

Save for the mad scientist shtick, *Jesse James Meets Frankenstein's Daughter* looks and moves like a typical B-grade western… albeit one made in the previous decade. (Geez, it's difficult to imagine this was made in the same year as Sergio Leone's *For a Few Dollars More.)* Aside from an addle minded, boneheaded script, the film is reasonably competent, and the characters ingratiating. (Too ingratiating, in the case of the outlaws; antiheroes walking a fine line between right and wrong is one thing, but making Jesse James into a gentlemanly, kind hearted chap may be stretching it a bit.) Even though most of the players ham it up, they ham it up well.

Despite the material given to them, the actors are able to retain their dignity throughout. Until, that is, some of them are forced to don a silly metal hat that is used to carry electrical currents into the body. (Painting a WWII helmet with green, yellow and red stripes and attaching a lightning rod to it may have worked in the days of the Buster Crabbe serials, but is truly embarrassing for something concocted in the sixties.) But the dime store props don't end there. The control panel in the Frankenstein's

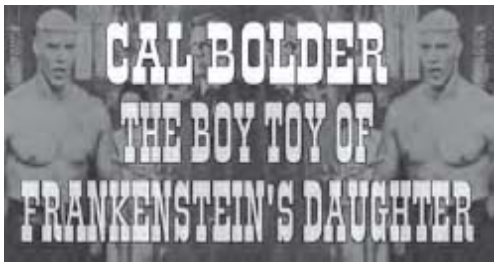
laboratory is nothing more than a studio mixing board. Furthermore, the doctors are apparently forgetful as to exactly which chemicals are toxic, as someone has taken great pains to label a bottle of poison (a beaker, actually) with a huge, intricately drawn skull and crossbones.

It takes an hour before the good stuff actually kicks in, when Frau Frankenstein finally excavates Hank's brainpan and does the old switcheroo with Granddad's synthetic brain. Her new slave, dubbed Igor, is an impressive figure with his stitches, shaved head and oiled muscles. (How he still manages to retain some of his earlier memories, having had his own gray matter scooped out and discarded, is beyond me.) Many of the other staples one would expect or hope for from a Frankenstein flick are present—as diluted as they are—including the ever reliable lightning storms. (According to the creepy siblings, Vienna was no longer dependable for electrical storms, thus necessitating their move to Central America in order to continue their dodgy experiments.) The monastery in which they have made themselves comfortable looks to be a castle matt painting recycled from another dime store creature feature. And where would a sixties horror film be without its timely orchestral hits? (Especially when one has been lulled to sleep with stock music.) Unlike Beaudine's follow up, the humor herein is more intentional, albeit dry. (In one running gag, whenever Jesse is asked how his partner was wounded, he insists with a straight face that Hank "shot himself cleaning his gun," to which everyone offers a nod of disbelief.) Much fun can be had from watching actress Narda Onyx chew the scenery as Frau Frankenstein, who would be just as comfortable playing the wardenness of a Nazi prison camp with her kraut accent and sadistic fervor.

And although Beaudine may have been able to always get his films in under budget, he finally found one thing he couldn't reign in on one of his sets… namely, Miss Estelita Rodriguez's lips. This woman—unable to utter a sentence without turning her entire pie hole inside out—makes Rosie Perez seem absolutely quaint with her exaggerated Hispanic delivery. If ever there was anything truly scary about this film, it's the fear that she might cut loose and accidentally slap one of her co-stars to death with her kisser.

The same material—sans cowboy shriek— was handled, shall we say, more *explicitly* five years later in Ernst von Theumer's lurid *La Figlia di Frankenstein* [The Daughter of Frankenstein] (1971), which actually does live up to the title by including the famous doctor's daughter and not his granddaughter (and grandson) as Beaudine's film does. (Since no one

adheres to Shelley's novel anyway, why they just didn't make them Victor Frankenstein's children is beyond me, as the script in no way demands that they be a generation removed.) With over 100 television appearances to his credit, star Lupton (1928–93) also appeared in Paul Bartel's *Private Parts* (1972). Even more prolific an actor, Gyergyai (1904–73) also made an appearance as a doctor—albeit uncredited— in the American produced tacked on footage for *The Evil of Frankenstein* (1964). A regular in Roy Rogers' westerns, Cuban born actress Rodriguez (1928–66) died the following year of influenza. Prolific actor Jim Davis (1909–81) also appeared in several Al Adamson and Sam Sherman outings, most notably as Sergeant Martin in *Dracula vs Frankenstein* (1971). William Fawcett (1894–1974) also appeared in *The Neanderthal Man* (1953) and *The Return of Dracula* (1958). Versatile character actor Caetano Paiva (1905–66) has done more to endear himself to us than anyone else in the cast, thanks to his work in *Creature from the Black Lagoon* (1954), *Revenge of the Creature* (1955), *Tarantula* (1955), *The Mole People (1956), They Saved Hitler's Brain* (1963), et al.



Interview conducted via email July 2003

FOR SOME TIME I had been wanting to do a piece on the horror westerns of William Beaudine, if only so I had a legitimate excuse to watch them back to back without thinking of them as guilty pleasures. Shortly before I made this bold venture, I was contacted by a friend of mine who is an award winning editor for a local newspaper. Seems that one of his reporters had tracked down actor Cal Bolder (Earl C Craver) and interviewed him for their Halloween special. Without hesitation, I followed his lead and contacted the retired performer by mail, which soon led to a phone conversation and a promised interview. It was a pleasant and insightful experience, as Mr

Craver had no shortage of interesting stories with which to regale me. Although *Jesse James Meets Frankenstein's Daughter* was his only genre effort, I was insistent on interviewing him for *Trashfiend.* Talking with him would also gave me an opportunity to question someone who had worked with director Beaudine, and hopefully I could get a little behind the scenes information on one of Beaudine's two horror western outings. Unfortunately, by the time the interview came about, Craver was knee deep in other projects, so his responses were short and sweet, with many questions left unanswered. Shortly after I discovered Earl had passed away on January 19, 2005, from cancer; suffice to say, I am saddened he didn't live long enough to see this interview published.

Born 1931 and raised in Elkhart, Kansas, Craver enrolled in Wichita University with the aid of an athletic scholarship. There, he focused on football until 1951 when, at the height of the Korean War, he enlisted in the Marines. While stationed in California, he met his future wife Billie, whom he married in 1954. In 1958, Craver was working as a motorcycle officer for the Los Angeles Police Department when things took an unexpected turn and he was given the opportunity to be in motion pictures. Born Earl C Craver, the burgeoning actor was dubbed Cal Bolder by his manager. Due to his impressive stature—6'4" and 240lbs—Craver was usually given the role of the heavy, and had no shortage of supporting roles in television westerns during his ten year career, but the big break at stardom never came. In 1968, Craver and his wife moved to Washington, where he lived until his passing.

TRASHFIEND: ***What was the first horror film you saw as a child? What kind of impression did it leave on you?***

CAL BOLDER: The early mummy and Frankenstein movies were the first, as far as I can remember. I was probably affected as any young child would have been.

Are you much of a horror fan yourself? What do you see as the most noticeable differences between modern day horror films and those being made when you did Jesse James Meets Frankenstein's Daughter?

I like many horror and mystery films. The most noticeable difference in today's films is the use of computer graphics.

Have you seen both of William Beaudine's horror westerns, namely Billy the Kid vs Dracula and Jesse James Meets Frankenstein's Daughter? What did you think of them?

Yes, I have, and thought they were both well done.Of course, you know which one is my favorite!

Left and right Cal Bolder as Hank Tracy in Jesse James Meets Frankenstein's Daughter (1965) Embassy Pictures, showing off his huge pectoral muscles while engaging in a bout of fisticuffs, and modeling the newest line of Flash Gordon roller derby helmets while napping on the set.

How did you secure the part of Hank Tracy in Jesse James Meets Frankenstein's Daughter?

The producer saw me in an episode of *Bonanza* called The Ape (airdate December 17, 1960), and called me in to do the part.

Your character was undoubtedly the most sympathetic player in the film. Despite his outlaw status, he was portrayed as the kindest of souls, and due in part to his trusting nature he was turned into a virtual killing machine. How did this role differ from the characters you usually portrayed? In retrospect, what would you have done differently in your portrayal if given the opportunity to stretch your wings?

Hank Tracy was a little more mentally challenged than some of the other characters that I've played, but I thought I nailed the part down pretty well.

Did you have to shave your head for the role? Was it worth it to get an impressive third billing?

Yes, I had to shave my head for the part, but the studio made me a custom wig so I could still do auditions. However, when people saw me bald it actually helped get me parts in other shows.

What was it like working for William Beaudine? How did he differ from the other filmmakers with whom you had worked?

He was a good director, but all business.

In your experience, did William 'One Shot' Beaudine live up to his nickname? If so, can you recall a time on the set of Jesse James Meets Frankenstein's Daughter in which he was actually forced into a second take?

Yes, he did live up to the name. I can't recall any instances, but the film was shot in one week, so there wasn't much time for second takes.

Do you recall Beaudine's attitude towards horror films? Do you know if it was his choice to meld genres, or a necessity to adapt in light of the fading interest in the old style gunslinger pictures?

It was obvious that he enjoyed making films. Whether it was his choice or just an opportunity to work behind the camera, I don't know.

Outside of a few silly gadgets, Jesse James Meets Frankenstein's Daughter looks fairly slick despite its threadbare budget. Where was it filmed, and for how much? How did the limited budget affect the production?

The film was shot on location in the San Fernando Valley, for how much I don't know. Other than whom they had as actors—a bigger budget might have bagged better known stars—it had little affect.

How did you get started in acting?

I was working for the Los Angeles Police Department, and I stopped a talent agent for speeding and gave him a ticket. He was impressed with my size and asked me if I ever considered an acting career. I said, "No, not really, but I'm willing to give anything a shot," and pretty soon he was sending me on interviews.

What was that experience like working on the cult television series Star Trek, where you played the part of Keel in the Friday's Child episode? [Airdate December 1, 1967.]

The experience was great, but that was before the show had much of a cult following.

What was your favorite role as an actor, and why?

The role of Arnie in the *Bonanza* episode The Ape, mostly because the director and all of the actors were very easy to work with.

As an actor, what was your greatest regret?

In 1964, a film agent asked me to go to Italy to shoot a string of western movies. I was doing fairly well with the agent I had; I had already done four or five things, including a couple of leading roles. I hated to just go to my agent and say "I'm leaving town," so I decided, "No, I think this guy is doing me all right" and stuck with him. And so Clint Eastwood was offered the chance to go over there, and… you know the rest of the story.

Why did you give up your acting career in 1968?

It's difficult to hold down a regular job to support your family and still get time off to do a movie. I never worked steady enough to support my family with movie work alone.

Having read an interview with you in The Wenatchee World, it came to my attention that you are a writer of crime fiction. What have you had published so far? What do you currently have in the works?

I wrote a suspense thriller called *Last Reunion*, which was published (as a print on demand book) through www.iuniverse.com. I am currently about 300 pages into my second novel, *Swift Justice.*

What do you think about the thinning line between crime fiction and more outright horror literature, with books like Thomas Harris' The Silence of the Lambs? What authors have influenced your writing the most?

I prefer the suspense genre where the reader is always skirting trouble. Patricia Cornwell and Tami Hoag are two of my favorite writers.

In closing, what do you want the epitaph on your tombstone to read?

Family always came first.

A beast more frightening than your most terrifying nightmare!
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US pressbook advertisement for The Crater Lake Monster (1977) Crown International Pictures

Interview conducted via email September 2002

IN THE FIRST issue of *Trashfiend* magazine my co-editor and contributing writer Devon Bertsch and I reviewed *The Crater Lake Monster* (1976), a film that we both thoroughly enjoyed even though we gave it our usual no holds barred thrashing. (Heck, even Akira Kurosawa and Orson Welles wouldn't fare much better if we gave coverage of their films; the fact that our reviews for *The Crater Lake Monster* were at least *twice* as long as any other featured in that issue was some indication to our twisted reverence.) Within a few months of publication, I received an email from Richard Cardella, the scriptwriter and star of said film. Without hesitation, I begged for an interview, and Richard gladly conceded, having thought he had already expended his fifteen minutes of fame. Suffice to say, both Devon and myself were happy for the opportunity to chat with him. (Devon wasted no time in sending Cardella his DVD of *The Crater Lake Monster* to be autographed, which now holds a cherished spot on his mantle.) Richard George Cardella (nicknamed Guido by his old firehouse friends) was born in Omaha, Nebraska on April 17, 1935. Enlisting in the Marines, he left for San Diego in 1957, where he spent two years toiling for Uncle Sam before opting for a quieter life beachside. In 1960 he met Sylvia, his wife of now forty two years, and started a long time working association with the Encinitas Fire Department. (He considers having survived his twenty five years in the department and escaping in one piece one of his biggest accomplishments.) During this time, he began collaborating with fellow filmmaker Bill Stromberg on what he refers to as "home movies", many of which employed painstaking stop motion photography; suffice to say, *The Crater Lake Monster* was the culmination of these efforts. Although he continues to keep

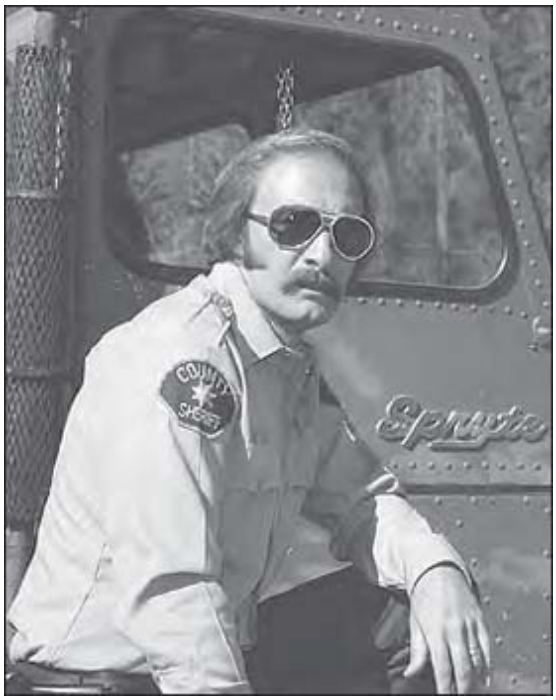
his feet wet to this day by taking bit parts in local Hollywood productions, his and Stromberg's film was the last one in which either functioned as filmmaker. Their only feature film has had a minor revival, thanks to Rhino Video's recent DVD release of a film that had been out of print for some time.

TRASHFIEND: ***What was the first horror film you saw as a child? What kind of impression did it leave on you?***

RICHARD CARDELLA: Whoa, that's way too far back for me to remember, but *Frankenstein* (1931) and *Dracula* (1931) were probably two of the firsts. Also *King Kong* (1933). As for an impression, they scared the crap out of me! When Bill Cosby talked about hiding under the theatre seat with the jujubes stuck all over him, I knew what he meant.

Are you much of a horror fan yourself ? What do you see as the most noticeable differences between modern day horror films and those of the seventies?

I'm a huge horror fan! Always have been. As for the differences, today's horror films have a lot more blood and tits and ass than they used to. I get a kick out of the not-so-subtle inference that teenage sex will get you killed. First you see the kids fucking their brains out, then you see them being slaughtered by Jason, or Freddy, or some other nutcase. These films are aimed at teenagers, so the message—if there is one—is totally lost on them.



Star Richard Cardella strikes a pose for The Crater Lake Monster (1977)
Crown International Pictures

What do you consider the pinnacles in horror, whether it be film and/or literature, and why? What do you consider the low points of the genre?

In literature I would go with anything written by HP Lovecraft. That guy could give me goose-bumps! To write the things he did, he would either have had to be insane or to have actually witnessed them. Either way it's a pretty scary thought. As for film, I have always been a fan of the less is more concept. It was the things you didn't see in a film that, to me, were the most disturbing. As one who grew up listening to radio shows, I have a vivid imagination, so the suggestion that there is something here—a presence—sets me in the mood. Low points? Hell, there aren't any! Today's crap will be tomorrow's treasures. Look at the way we think of Ed Wood today. His stuff is great! I think the word 'camp' was coined just for his films.

Is The Crater Lake Monster the only film in which you have functioned as a writer and/or actor? What filmmaking experience did you have prior to this?

The Crater Lake Monster is the only film that I had a major part in. Not that I planned it that way, it's just how it worked out. Bill Stromberg and I had been producing backyard films—very sophisticated films—for years. It was stuff that was for our own enjoyment, but it got me used to being in front of a camera. I guess you could call that prior experience. In the last few years, I have had the opportunity to work on a couple of major pictures here in northern California. I was just background—that's the politically correct way to say extra—but I had a blast. There was *Outbreak* (1995), directed by Wolfgang Petersen, and *The Majestic* (2001), directed by Frank Darabont. I can't say enough good things about Frank. He is such a nice guy. Even though we were just extras, he treated us with the same respect that all his principals received. Oh, yes. I also got to meet James Whitmore on that shoot. Ever since *Them!* (1954) I've been a huge fan of his. Working in key scenes with Jim Carrey, Martin Landau and Whitmore was terrific!

What inspired you while writing* The *Crater Lake Monster?

To be honest, my inspiration was Bill Stromberg. He had this vision of us moving on from low budget picture to low budget picture, until we could afford to make a definitive horror/monster film that we could really be proud of. We were both inspired by the works of Willis O'Brien and Ray Harryhausen.

Why didn't you and Stromberg ever follow up The Crater Lake Monster with another film?

Bill tried his best to get a fair shake from the distributor to no avail. They kept telling him that the picture wasn't making any money. This was at the same time that *Variety* magazine had it on their list of "Giants among the Bantamweights". That list was made up of all the indies from 1970–79 reporting $1,000,000 or more in rentals. Crown's response to this listing: "Hype and bullshit!" I took it upon myself to contact one of the theatres showing it in Albuquerque. I asked them if the picture was doing any business and the response was yes, it was doing okay. Crown got wind of my efforts and had a tizzy fit, I guess it was a no-no to question the suits. Anyway, all the machinations of Crown really wore Bill down. He was depending on a return from *The Crater Lake Monster* to finance another feature and that just wasn't going to happen. To make a long, sad story short, he just lost all his desire to try and do it all over again. I couldn't blame him.

He put his heart and soul into this little film and he was dumped on, big time. I just went on being a fireman and looked at it as something to bring up at parties: “Did you know that I was once an actor?”

Is there a real Crater Lake, and—if not—where did you do your location filming? Why did you choose this locale as a backdrop for your film?

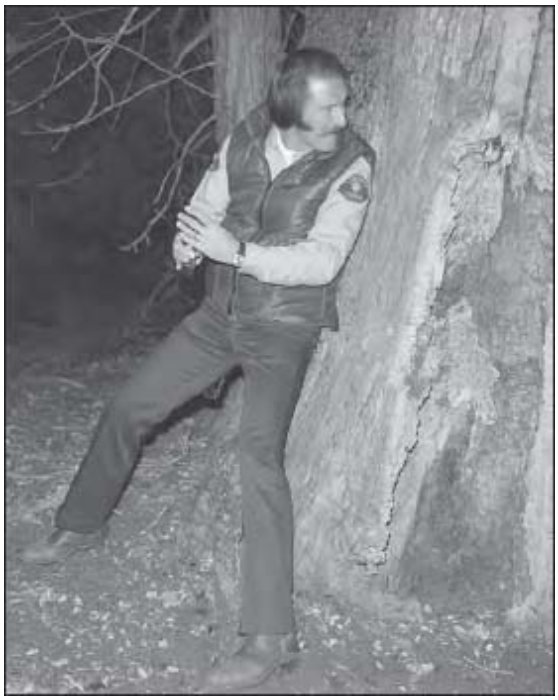
We shot the film at Huntington Lake, above Fresno, and on Palomar Mountain in San Diego County. As for why did we choose these areas? I think the images speak for themselves. Both locations were visually stunning. There were some expository lines in a scene that was cut, about this lake being in California, not Oregon.

How did you and Stromberg share the scriptwriting chores?

The concept was Bill’s, but he and I worked out the dialogue and action together. We would sit around and bounce ideas off each other and when, whatever it was, the dialogue or action sounded right, Bill would commit it to paper. We used a tape recorder too. If it sounded okay to us on playback, it was put in the script. Let me interject something here. Bill is the closest thing to a brother that I’ve ever had, and our writing sessions were not work, they were fun! Sometimes we would find something we said extremely funny and then it was coffee blowing out of my nose and my wife yelling, “Hey, you guys are supposed to be working in there!” Bottom line? There were no chores involved in our relationship. We were happy.

The finale that has Mitch mourning Arnie’s death was probably the most memorable thing about the film, aside from the plesiosaur itself, naturally. Did you feel that you were taking a chance that many Hollywood productions wouldn’t, by killing off one of the film’s more sympathetic characters?

No, not really.We were telling a cautionary tale here. The reason Arnie came to such a violent end was because of his pursuit of the almighty dollar. If you listen to everything he says in the film, his total motivation was money. Reason went out the window when he thought he was going to cash in big time with the capture of the plesiosaur. His death was brought on by his own deeds.



Another pose for star Richard Cardella in The Crater Lake Monster (1977)
Crown International Pictures

One gets the impression that most everyone who appeared in The Crater Lake Monster were locals, although a few of the actors seemed comfortable in front of the camera, in particular yourself and the gentlemen who played Arnie and Mitch. Were many of the cast members prof essional actors? Furthermore, some of the dialogue seems surprisingly natural. Do you recall if there was much improvisation on your parts?

As I said before, this was my first film other than the small stuff Bill and I had been doing. I was working for the Encinitas Fire Department when we got the go ahead for *The Crater Lake Monster.* Glenn Roberts was working in a gas station when Bill saw him and thought that Glenn had a look that would fit right in with the script. Mark Siegel came from a varied background. He had been a schoolteacher, worked as a clown for Ringling Brothers, tried his hand at acting on Broadway, and worked for Universal Studios before he was cast in *The Crater Lake Monster.* There were a lot of our friends that ended up in the film. Ferguson, the rancher, was a long time friend of Bill's, who was a professor at a local college. The robber, the clerk

and the lady victim in the liquor store were all friends, as well as the birdwatcher, who was also responsible for the film's sound. The rest of the actors came from the LA area. They all had some experience in film or TV, but I've got to tell you, the 'amateurs' involved gave some of the best performances. Maybe it was because they had no preconceived ideas about how to act.

As for the dialogue, we tried to stay as close to the script as possible, but once in a while a scene that read like *Gone with the Wind* filmed like *Plan 9 from Outer Space,* so we tried other things. More than not, they worked out. As for the dialogue sounding natural, we worked hard at that. One other thing, Paul Gentry, our cin-ematographer on *The Crater Lake Monster* was only twenty three at the time of the shoot. Man, was I impressed at the eye this kid had! He was responsible for a huge amount of the imagery that ended up in the film. I have to admit that it gave us pause to see him cruising along in a boat with this very expensive 35mm Ariflex hanging over the side. He was pretty fearless and thought nothing of trudging through near freezing lake water to get the shot. I'm happy to say that he and I have maintained a friendship for the last twenty five years.

How did the production on* The *Crater Lake Monster go? How long did filming take?

More than not, the production ran pretty smooth. Of course, there were the occasional clashes, most often caused by a bruised ego, but they were far and few between. Like I said, we were working with a lot of old friends on this picture. The biggest problems we experienced were brought on by the suits at Crown. I guess they had a right to their demands, as we were working with their money. The major filming took place over my vacation from the Fire Department, which was about six weeks. When that time proved to be insufficient, I took a short leave of absence to finish up. The way things worked out, I'm glad I kept my day job. I stayed with the Fire Department and retired as Captain after twenty five years in 1986.

How did the limited budget affect the film the most? If you had had a larger budget at your disposal, what would you have done differently?

Crown International started scaling back the budget about halfway through the shoot. They redlined the dancehall sequence that was scheduled —you know, the dance that Arnie and Mitch were on their way to when they

got into their fight—and they tossed the original score and decided to go with canned music. Bill and I have a friend, John W Morgan, who is an accomplished composer. He was set to do the score and had even penned a leitmotif for the Sheriff. I was stoked! My own theme! Well, that went down the drain and we ended up with music that sucks!

Stock music does have a tendency to lessen a film's impact, especially when it lulls one into a stupor. Was the score accompanying the opening credits canned music as well? Unlike the rest of the film, it has a distinctly late seventies flavor, and doesn't sound it like it was swiped from an earlier production.

The entire score was canned. Just where the butcher that put it together culled it, I don't know. I do know that we were appalled when we first heard it, especially when John Morgan was ready to write an original score for the film. Oh, just a minute. As I remember it, the bluegrass sounding song that you hear in the café was, I think, an original. I don't remember who wrote it.

You alluded to the fact that you had difficulties with your distributor, Crown International. What other problems did you face in your working relationship?

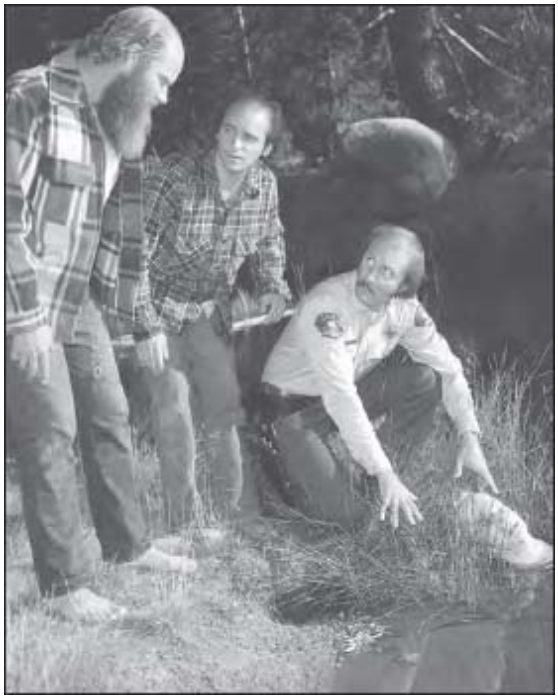
Crown turned out to be less than visionary in their actions towards *The Crater Lake Monster.* They hired an editor that was a hack if ever I saw one. The names that appear in the credits as editors didn't have a thing to do with the final cut. If you notice, there isn't a fade or dissolve in the whole picture! And there was a key animation scene that was tossed or lost—who knows—that Jim Danforth did, that I hear was genius. This film was made for less than $150,000! You would have thought that Crown would have coughed up a few more dollars to make this a better film. As for what we would have done differently, we would have done all the things I just said that Crown omitted.

Do you have any interesting stories or amusing anecdotes concerning the making of the film?

We shot the principal scenes at Lake Huntington, in the Sierras. We took over a ski lodge that, at the time, was known as China Peak. It was in the fall and the lodge was making preparations for the upcoming ski season and there were a lot of young people working there. We ate in the huge

dining room along with these people. I noticed an odd thing that happened every day when we broke for lunch and I walked into the dining room. It was like someone turned off the sound. A momentary, complete silence. I didn't know why until someone in management called me aside and asked if I minded removing my uniform shirt and badge when I came in, because I was giving all the dope smokers indigestion. They thought, if only for a moment, that I was the real thing. The man!

Then there was the fact that every fall something happened to Huntington that we didn't know about. We arrived at the dock that served as Arnie and Mitch's place of business one morning, to find that the shoreline was wider than the day before! Bill made some frantic phone calls and discovered that they were draining down the lake! Huntington is not a natural lake, there's a dam at one end and they manage the thing. We had to adjust camera angles every day to hide the fact that the lake was receding.



Roberts, Siegel and Cardella are given a "heads up" from The Crater Lake Monster (1977) Crown International Pictures

Do you think the scene where the hero employs heavy machinery to battle the plesiosaur inspired a similar scene in James Cameron's Aliens (1985),

where Ripley used a power loader to fight the alien queen?

I'd be flattered, but I doubt that Cameron ever saw our little picture, although BJ Rack, who was a producer on *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* (1991), also worked on *The Crater Lake Monster.* She ended up being uncredited on *The Crater Lake Monster,* but she was the one who kept the production from falling apart on more than one occasion. I don't think *The Crater Lake Monster* appears on her résumé.

You mentioned prior to this interview that you were a big fan of stop motion animation. Was this a major factor in the formation of and/ or your participation in The Crater Lake Monster?

Although this was my first foray into professional acting, Bill and I had been making short films for years. I'm not talking about home movies here. We had costumes, effects, decent sets— everything a film should have. Bill had this big, old garage behind his house and there was room for a shop and enough space to build a set. He decided that we were going to do Ray Bradbury's story'A Sound of Thunder.'Now, this was quite an ambitious undertaking, but somehow it all came together. Bill built the T-Rex along with the help of a young friend of ours, Phil Tippett. When the film was completed, Bill took it to show to Brad–bury. His comment:"Great job!" I guess that was just the push that Bill needed, because it wasn't long before *The Crater Lake Monster* was on the menu. We always loved stop motion films and I guess it was understood that if we ever had the chance to do a big screen film, it was going to be one that utilized the craft.

Who are your favorite stop motion artists? Who do you think is the leading artist working today?

Ray Harryhausen was the best. All you have to do is watch *Jason and the Argonauts* (1963) or *The 7th Voyage of Sinbad* (1958) or *Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger* (1977) to understand why. Phil Tippett is one of the best. Unfortunately, the late David Allen passed away before he could finish his film *The Primevals.* Stop motion fans everywhere have been waiting to see this one reach the screen. Some friends and colleagues of his are hoping to finish it as a tribute to David. He was a wonderful person. As far as the leading artist working today, I have to admit that I don't have a clue. CGI seems to be what's happening today.

As a fan of stop motion photography, what do you think of Hollywood's dependency on CGI [Computer Graphics Imaging]? What do you feel are the benefits and/or shortcomings of CGI?

I think that Hollywood was too quick to toss stop motion on the trash heap. Granted, CGI is getting better all the time, but there was something—I know this sounds silly—'real' about the use of miniatures. They always looked to me as having substance, where some CGI looks flat. Maybe I'm just clinging to the past here, but I still have the utmost respect for those artists that toiled for weeks to get a few seconds of fantastic film.

Are there any instances where you would consider using CGI over stop motion photography? Where do you feel CGI has been used effectively?

Sure, I would utilize CGI in any shot that encompassed multiple moving objects, whether they be people or beasties. Look at those horrific creatures rolling over the landscape in *Starship Troopers* (1997). Man, did those scenes pucker me up! And those scenes in *The Mummy* (1999) where the flesh eating scarabs were scuttling across the floor? Yuck! But when you're showcasing a single creature, my personal preference is stop motion.

How much of a hand did you have in the design of the titular monster? From the earliest conceptualizing of the film, was it always intended to be a baby plesiosaur?

The design of the plesiosaur was strictly up to Bill and Phil Tippett. Phil was really coming into his own at the time. He was also working on *Star Wars* (1977) too. I remember him trying to explain the plot of it to Bill and I.I think he called it "sort of a sci fi/western/action/drama". When we finally saw it, his description was pretty much on the money. Let me interject something here. The first script that Bill wrote was about a Sasquatch or Yeti or abominable snowman. It was pretty good, but after a while he decided that our first love—dinosaurs—would screen. With all the dino flicks that have come to the screen in the twenty five years since *The Crater Lake Monster* first saw the light of day, I guess he was right.

David Allen is credited as Stop Motion Supervisor in the film's credits. Were Stromberg and Tippett only involved with the designs, or did they actually have a hands-on involvement with the actual animation as well?

David Allen was the main animator, but, about half of it was done by Phil Tippett and Randy Cook. You know, those guys with the Academy Awards? Also Jim Danforth, whose premier contribution was lost by the hack who edited the picture. Bill had his hands full with the shooting of the film, so, no, he didn't do any animation.

If you had the opportunity to remake* The *Crater Lake Monster, what would you—as a scriptwriter—do differently?

I think that I would expand the roles of Mitch and Arnie. They seem to be the most memorable characters in the film. Also, there would be more effects cuts. Other than that, what Bill and I did the first time seemed to work, so why change it? This little picture has been around for twenty five years and it's still getting some action. I think that this is an accomplishment to be proud of.

One question that I'm sure is on most viewers' minds is: how did the blood get all over the inside of the fisherman's boat when he was killed underwater? Did our resident monster use the rental as a trough? Some of the characters seemed a little perplexed by this conundrum as well.

The night that the scene was shot, the one where the fisherman gets chomped, I was busy saving lives and property from demon fire. Okay, I was on duty at my station. We had already shot the stuff up at the lake and I assume that there should have been shots of the fisherman trying to re-enter the boat with an arm or leg missing. At least some gushing bite wounds. That would have dovetailed with our scene at the dock where we are trying to figure out how "all that blood got into the boat". We screwed up, that's all I can say.

In light of the recent DVD release of The Crater Lake Monster from Rhino Video, what do you feel about your film reaching a new generation of fans?

To be honest, I was totally amazed when Rhino put out the DVD. I thought that my fifteen minutes of fame were up years ago. I haven't mentioned the fact that I was once in a film that made the big screen to anyone in a long time. Not that I forgot about it, it was just old news. Now, with the release of the DVD, *The Crater Lake Monster* is going to reach a whole new audience, and that makes this old guy very happy.

The Crater Lake Monster (1977)

Crown International Pictures [US] DIR: William R Stromberg PRO: William R Stromberg SCR: Richard G Cardella and William R Stromberg DOP: Paul Gentry SFX: Bill Dickenson VFX: David Allen

STR: Richard G Cardella, Susy Claycomb, Kacey Cobb, John Crowder, Marv Eliot, Richard Garrison, Jim Goeppinger, Michael Hoover, Bob Hyman, Garry Johnston, Suzanne Lewis, Glenn Roberts, Joe Sasway, Hal Scharn, Sonny Shepard, Mark Sieger, Mike Simmons, and Mary Winford Approximately 83m; Color; PG

DVD: *The Crater Lake Monster* [Rhino Video; 85(83) m; WS; NTSC R1]

VHS: *The Crater Lake Monster* [Interglobal Video; 85(83)m; FS; NTSC] [United Home Video; 85(83) m; FS; NTSC]

ADL: “A Beast More Frightening Than Your Most

Terrifying Nightmare!”

A CAVE painting depicting Native Americans fending off a plesiosaur is discovered in an abandoned mine shaft by two young archeologists, “proof positive that at least some survived into the age of man.” (You just can’t beat empirical evidence.) While studying their find of the century, a meteorite crash lands in nearby Crater Lake, the heat from which begins the incubation process for a very well preserved dinosaur egg sitting on the bottom of the mountain lake. (Three scientific finds in less than twenty four hours… what are the odds?) While the archeologists are waiting for the meteor to cool down so they can recover it, tourists visiting the local resort town start disappearing, with only an occasional body part washing ashore. Pretty soon, with the cave painting a dark reminder, history begins to repeat itself.

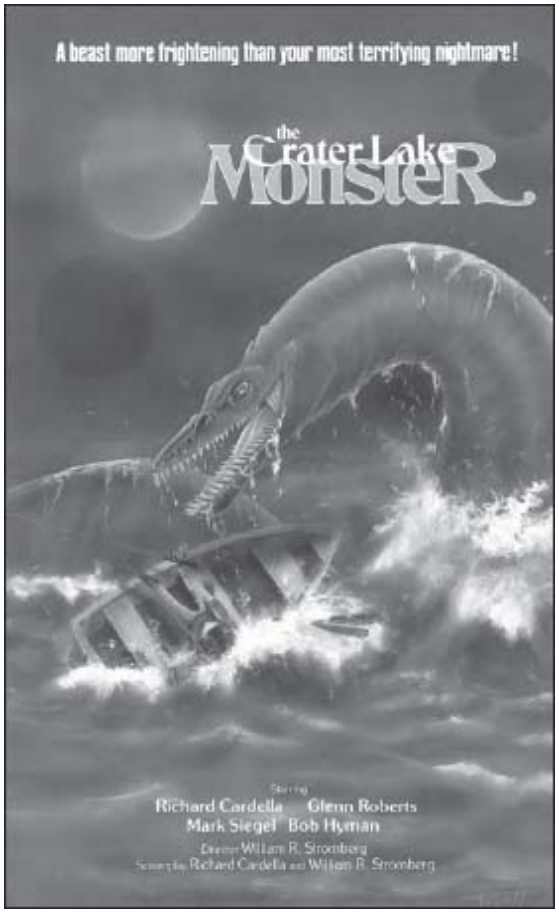
I originally reviewed this film in the first issue of the previous incarnation of *Trashfiend.* Unfortunately, I made the mistake of watching the film for the first time at one of our infrequent video parties, which meant

trying my darnedest not to be distracted by the mind numbing arguments of co-editors Devon Bertsch and Michael von Sacher-Masoch. I have long since learned that such an outing does not make for an ideal environment when one is attempting to write a critique. Prior to the interview with Cardella, I felt it crucial that I re-watch the film, *alone;* not surprisingly, I was more receptive the second time around.

Mexican lobby card for The Crater Lake Monster (1977) Organizacion Apolo, S.A.

Granted, *The Crater Lake Monster* won't be receiving any Oscars any time soon, but it is engaging for most of its eighty three minutes and one of the more admirable monster movies of its type. The high point of the film—as if it needs to be said—is the titular creature that makes short work of the townsfolk and their livestock. Thankfully, there are only a few scenes that rely on an oversized rubber head to bring the monster to life; most scenes instead utilize tried and tested stop motion photography, in part courtesy of the late David Allen (1944-99), who worked on such notable cult films as

Equinox (1969) and *Flesh Gordon* (1973), and spent his later years gainfully employed by Full Moon Studios as their head animator. Although not quite as good as the work of Ray Harryhausen—what is?—the animation in *The Crater Lake Monster* is far from shoddy, and much better than anything seen in, say, Sid and Marty Krofit's *Land of the Lost* (1974-76). (Heck, give me this over ninety eight per cent of the CGI being used in Hollywood today.) The film also marks the screen debuts of animators Randall Cook and Phil Tippet. Cook has since hit the big time with the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, and Tippett had similar success with the first three *Star Wars* films and *Jurassic Park* (1993).


A beast more frightening than your most terrifying nightmare!
the Crater Lake Monster
Richard Cardella Glenn Roberts
Mark Siegel Bob Hyman
William R. Stromberg
Richard Cardella William R. Stromberg

VHS box art for The Crater Lake Monster (1986) United Entertainment, Inc. #1060

The Crater Lake Monster displays some passable production values considering the obviously low budget. The panoramic and isolated backdrop not only gives the film a distinct flavor, but also makes the unnoticed monster runs amok story quite conceivable. On the down side, the stock music tends to lull one into a stupor when it isn't a distraction. Some of the performers are naturals who keep the film interesting even when the resident dinosaur is sleeping off its reluctant meals; others, though, offer somnambulistic performances that give the viewer the illusion that it's two in the morning no matter what time of the day the film makes it into the player. (Insomniacs, take notice.) There is some comedie relief (yeah, yeah, I know what you're probably thinking… comedy relief from what?) involving two bumpkins who own a boat renting service, which is not only funny but proves to be the film's greatest strength next to the monster.

Slowing things down is a forced subplot about a trigger happy hold up man—which includes the most worthless car-going-over-a-cliff sequence I have ever seen—that screams of padding but ups the plesiosaur's body count by one. (Heck, it could have been a full eighty three minutes of nothing but people being eaten by a big lizard and I would have been content.) Although the finale involving the hero beating our resident beastie with a Caterpillar [bulldozer] seems a bit anti-climactic— one expects the creature to be more resilient and put up a better fight—it is always an enriching experience to see people take on dinosaurs with heavy machinery.

The biggest mystery to be found within the film is not how the dinosaur egg managed to remain unscathed for millions of years, but how all that blood got inside the fisherman's boat when he was killed after falling into the lake. Did the monster not want to sully his drinking water and so decide to use the boat as a trough when the viewer wasn't looking? Inquiring minds want to know.

Interview conducted via email July 2005

MOST HORROR fans recognize John Stanley as the author of *The Creature Feature Movie Guide* [Creatures at Large Press; 1981], which remains in print to this day, having been revised and updated no less than five times. Dubbed "the Leonard Maltin of horror films" by the press, Stanley has a reputation that precedes him. Until recently though, many people were unaware that the revered horror film host turned film reviewer had also tried his hand at filmmaking, producing a formidable low budget shocker in the mid seventies called *Nightmare in Blood*. Thanks to the DVD revolution, this is changing.

In 1960, Stanley was hired as a copy boy by *The San Francisco Chronicle*, eventually working his way up to the more prestigious positions of writer and editor on the newspaper's Sunday Datebook stories. Although he devoted much of his spare time to film and book projects throughout the years, he remained on staff at *The San Francisco Chronicles* until his retirement in 1993.

Stanley hooked up with Kenn Davis—a co-worker at the *Chronicles* who was also a devout film buff—and in 1970 they decided to try their hand at scriptwriting, producing a screenplay for a film called *The Dark Side of the Hunt*. Much like the 1971 blockbuster *Shaft*, their proposed script featured a black private eye, but this was before the later film helped usher in the black film explosion of the seventies. Unfortunately, Stanley and

Davis turned down a modest offer from American International Pictures, as they were instead hoping to produce the film themselves, but they ultimately failed to raise the financing. Still itching to get into filmmaking, the determined duo started work on a second project, which would eventually become *Nightmare in Blood,* a film that—in terms of production—lived up to the nightmare in its title. The film was finally released in 1978 to little fanfare, had a brief run on video in the mid eighties, and then for all intents and purposes was lost, forgotten by everyone except hardcore trashfiends and enthusiasts of obscure horror fare.

With *Nightmare in Blood* in the can but still awaiting distribution, Stanley had two books published, namely *World War III* [Avon Books; 1976] and *The Dark Side* [Avon Books; 1976]. The latter—co-authored by Davis—was based on their unrealized screenplay, and was nominated for the prestigious Edgar Award. Later, Stanley published the Robert Bloch collection *Lost in Time and Space with Lefty Feep* [Creatures at Large Press; 1987] and edited the biography *Them Ornery Mitchum Boys: The Adventures of Robert & John Mitchum* [Creatures at Large Press; 1989].

In 1979, Stanley took over as host for the Saturday night horror program *Creature Features.* First aired in 1971 on KTVU-TV in San Francisco, California, and later on KXTL-TV in Sacramento, host Bob Wilkins would forgo the time honored traditions of greasepaint and scenery chewing, and instead open the shows in a more leisurely, down to earth fashion, a trademark that Stanley would adopt as well during his stay, which ended when the show was cancelled in 1984. Aside from making the occasional cameo in low budget films, Stanley has shied away from filmmaking and focused on his writing in the years since.

Promotional still of John Stanley on the set of Creature Features (1979–1984) KXTL-TV

Having viewed for the first time the nearly forgotten *Nightmare in Blood* only a few years ago, I was both pleased and surprised to hear Image Entertainment's announcement that they would be giving a proper release to said film. Being a fan, I wasted no time in, first, securing a copy of the disc and, second, tracking down Mr Stanley for an interview, to which he graciously said yes. Although I seem to be in the minority when it comes to recognizing the merits of the underrated *Nightmare in Blood*, I hope that my interview and review will introduce the film to others who will be able to appreciate it for the self same reasons.

TRASHFIEND: ***What was the first horror film you saw as a child? What kind of impression did it leave on you?***

JOHN STANLEY: Howard Hawks' *The Thing from Another World* (1951) was my introduction to movie horror. I spent the entire summer of '51 afraid

to walk down corridors alone, imagining that the ‘vegetable’ creature would leap out and grab me. And I never forgot the music. I still think that it’s the scariest score—by Dimitri Tiomkin—ever written for a film. A few months later *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951) reinforced my newfound belief that movies could be terrifying. I still marvel at how Robert Wise directed Patricia Neal to respond so realistically to Gort when he meets her in the park and then carries her unconscious body into the spaceship. Her fear when she wakes up alone and trapped in the ship with Gort is a classic moment.

As an avid horror fan, what do you see as the most noticeable differences between modern day horror films and those of the seventies when Nightmare in Blood was made? Did you notice much of a change in trends within the genre from the moment of its inception in 1972 to its release in 1978, and do you think that this had an impact on how the film was received?

We’re all supposed to be so insightful and erudite to notice trends when we’re trying to get a film financed and shot with a minimal crew and budget? Yeah, sure. Who was worried about other movies? Or the subtleties of their content? Hardly. We spent years just trying to get the damn thing finished—in a release print stage. Impact on how the film was received? I was merely thankful there were a few theatres willing to play the finished print. Anything else was gravy.

US one-sheet art for Nightmare in Blood by Kenn Davis (1978) Xeromega Production Company

What do you consider the pinnacles in horror, whether it be film and or literature? What do you consider the low points of the genre?

Alien (1979) was a cornerstone film that blended various genres into a newfound genre and opened up countless imaginations to new possibilities. George Pal's movies were important to their time and place because they advanced the art of movie making and gave B genres a new acceptability. I think Robert Wise's *The Haunting* (1963) was excellent, but movies are a visual form and most filmmakers overpower with too many visuals. I guess Val Lewton contributed some good work. I do believe that sometimes less is better. The low points of horror have been all the remakes of good films into lousy films.

Although Nightmare in Blood was the first and only feature film in which you have functioned as a director, did you ever try your hand at filmmaking in the way of short subjects or backyard productions prior to this?

Yes, Kenn and I made a short 16mm film called *Homecoming: A Fable* in 1971. It won a prize at some foreign film festival (I can't remember which one) and was shown once on *Creature Features* because Bob Wilkins wanted to do me a favor after I had written a major story about him for the *San Francisco Chronicle.* However, *Homecoming* is an awful film. I saw it a couple of years ago and refused to include it as a bonus feature on the Image Entertainment DVD release of *Nightmare in* Blood. Just awful. Besides, the print had gone bad and was splotchy. Some things are better left in the dust.

Between you and co-scriptwriter Davis, how did you share the writing chores? Nightmare in Blood is very much a product of the times, but if you had the opportunity to remake the film, what would you, as a scriptwriter, do differently?

We would discuss the story and characters at great length and then each of us would write some of the scenes. I cannot remember much more about it. The script failed in interrelating the vampire actor with the beautiful woman played by Barrie Youngfellow. There should have been more sex and tension. We didn't gel the deeper emotions of the character. We thought we were being clever with the actor and the writer discussing story concepts, but we needed to get deeper into the characters.

Aside from the script, is there anything you would do differently?

I would have better stunts and special effects. We had no money and as a result, the film suffered terribly. At least we had a great set: the old Fox Theatre in downtown Oakland. It still stands today, a forgotten relic of the golden age of Hollywood.

Were the problems with production and distribution responsible for your never doing a follow up to Nightmare in Blood? Is there any chance you would ever try your hand at filmmaking again?

Nightmare in Blood did take up too many years of my life. I might have kept on going to a second film but the chance to host *Creature Features* came shortly after the movie was released and I spent the next six years working as an entertainment writer at the paper. By the time I started getting serious again in 1986 after the demise of the TV series, it was too late to take advantage of any of the momentum from *Nightmare in Blood.* So I stayed happy as a newspaperman and started publishing more books. Robert Bloch's Lefty Feep stories were a joy for me to bring back to the public. Also working with the Mitchum family for a couple of years for *Them Ornery Mitchum Boys*. It turned out to be a very readable book but John Mitchum just wouldn't tell the full truth about his brother Bob and as a result, I think readers know the book is a sham, even though it is well illustrated and a good read. He broke down crying one night when he told me some unprinted stories about Bob, and that's the night I knew I had a book that would never crash through and become a big hit. There were just 5,000 trade paperbacks and 250 hardcovers—but those hardcovers were signed by both Bob and John and are collectibles today.

In light of the recent DVD release of Nightmare in Blood from Image Entertainment, what do you feel about your film reaching a new generation of fans?

I doubt it if will have much impact on anybody. It suffers too much from weak production and story and just doesn't reach the levels that we had been striving for. A novelty item quickly forgotten, no doubt, by most viewers. Some reviewers seem to like it, but I'm not sure why. Jerry Walter did an excellent job as the vampire, but better writing would have made his portrayal a classic. We as writers betrayed him.

Was Nightmare in Blood directly or indirectly responsible for your stint on Creature Features? How did you get involved with the program?

I was the first to write about Bob Wilkins in the *San Francisco Chronicles* and we had a friendship going throughout the seventies. When I heard he was leaving, I called him and he said he would help me get the job if I wanted it. I hadn't even known I wanted it until he asked. I tried out for it, thinking I didn't have a chance in hell, and to my amazement got the job. I still don't know why as I had no prior experience.

Unlike most late night horror hosts, you and your predecessor Wilkins did not have ghoulish alter egos. Speaking for yourself and—if possible—for Bob, what were the reasons behind this?

Bob was just being Bob—he wouldn't have known how to be ghoulish, it would have been ridiculous. He did do a satirical spaceman character later, Captain Cosmic, but Bob was just showing us the comedy side to his character. When I took over the show I didn't try to imitate Bob. I just dressed in a youngish style and took the attitude that I was the fella fascinated by all the mysteries of life (the invisible world around us, is what I sometimes called it). Let my guests dress strangely if they wanted to. I think that worked out very well. So Bob and I might have looked the same but we did play it differently when the cameras rolled.

Malakai admires his star billing in Nightmare in Blood (1975) Xeromega Production Company

The new release of Nightmare in Blood includes some clips from Creature Features as a bonus; how much of the footage survives from the show?

Quite a bit. Tom Wyrsch of Petaluma, California, has put a lot of it on VHS tapes. He eventually switched some of the stuff over to DVD and there are two excellent DVDs of my material, as well as a couple of Bob's stuff. Also, Tom published *The Bob Wilkins Scrapbook* and *The John Stanley Scrapbook* and did pretty well with them. He still occasionally brings them back combined in a hardcover format. Tom is an incredible guy who has helped to keep *Creature Features* alive after all these years.

Creature Features Movie Guide Strikes Again (1994) Creatures at Large Press

Do you have any amusing anecdotes from the years you worked on the show? Were there any funny, unpredictable moments caught on tape that were aired?

One night two lesbians did a catfight on the floor of the studio. They were wearing T-shirts with holes and their breasts popped through the holes on camera. Although it wasn't aired (we always taped the show in advance)

it was shown to all the guys around the station for months afterwards. However, if a mistake was made, the tape was stopped, rolled back and we did the scene again. I have a hundred stories about things that almost went wrong: the day Christopher Lee almost walked out on the show, the guest who never showed up, etc. But I'm saving the good ones for my book.

Why was the show cancelled in 1984?

It was cancelled because the station manager didn't like the horror films being sold into syndication. I guess the station decided after fourteen years it was time to put it to bed.

Who was your favorite horror show host as a child? Who is your favorite now?

I didn't have any as a child. I do enjoy Elvira, although I still haven't figured out what she has that Bob and I didn't have. Zacherley, whom I met once, was also very good.

Why has The Creature Features Movie Guide and its various incarnations migrated from one publisher to the other over the years?

I published the first edition myself and sold 10,000 copies. Warner Books saw it and liked it and decided to print one edition with updates. When they lost interest, I went ahead and did books three and four, which will always be my favorites. Berkley Books did the fifth edition, a smaller paperback, and then Berkley did a sixth after merging with another company and it turned out to be really shitty and so I told the publisher to go stuff it, and haven't done a seventh book— and still don't know if I will ever write another until I get over being pissed off.

Do you have any books in the works?

Yes, I am writing *The Career that Dripped with Gore: The Memoirs of a Creature Feature Host*. I have several excellent chapters but have not finished the book yet—slowed down by the aging process and some bad but not life threatening health. The book will ultimately combine my interviews from the *Creature Features* show with a lot of great material from my days at *The San Francisco Chronicles.* I have one of the earliest interviews with Leonard Nimoy and chronicled almost all of *Star Trek's* growth from the beginning. I also have a grand William Castle interview. So many names I

could drop. How about Lucille Ball? Without her, *Star Trek* would never have existed. I've got the story from her own lips.

Thanks for answering my questions; hopefully, the film will acquire a few new fans because of it.

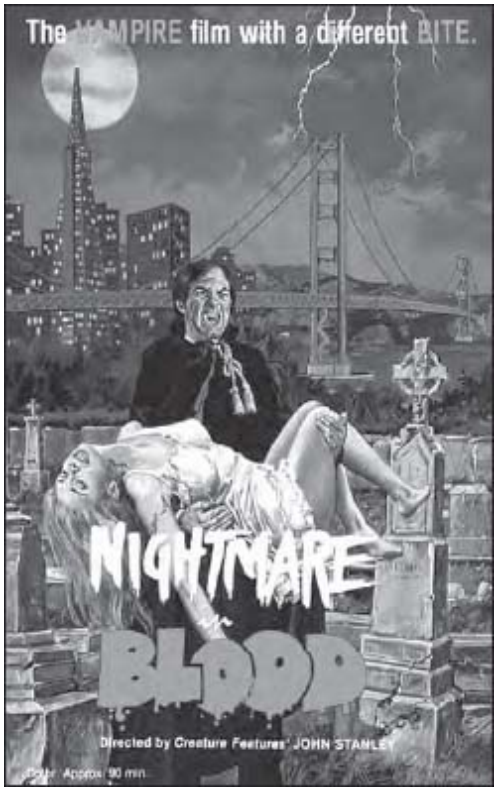
Thanks for believing in the project and for your enthusiastic attitude. I'm amazed anyone even wants to know anything about *Nightmare in Blood.*

NIGHTMARE IN BLOOD (1975)

> Xeromega Production Company [US] DIR: John Stanley PRO: John Stanley SCR: Kenn Davis and John Stanley DOP: Kenn Davis SFX: Art Wendall and Dan Wilson MUS: David Litwin STR: Grace Bauer, Harry Bauer, Justin Bishop, Dan Caldwell, John H Cochran, Fred Dekker, Drew Eshelman, Molly Gleason, Ray K Goman, Mike Hitchcock, Irving Israel, Zekial Marko, Kerwin Mathews, Charles Murphy, Hy Pyke, Kathleen Quinlan (aka Kathy Quinlan), Stan Ritchie, Craig Schaefer, Erika Stanley, John Stanley, Morgan Upton, Jerry Walter, Bob Wilkins, Yvonne Young and Barrie Youngfellow
>
> AKA: *Horror Convention* Approximately 90m; Color; Rated R DVD: *Nightmare in Blood* [Image Entertainment; 90m; WS; NTSC R1]
>
> VHS: *Horror Convention* [Imperial Entertainment Corp.; 89m; FS; NTSC] *Nightmare in Blood* [Cycle Video; 89m; FS; PAL] [Video City Productions; 89m; FS; NTSC]
>
> ADL: "The Vampire Film with a Different Bite"

BOX OFFICE horror star Malakai (Jerry Walter) is asked to be the guest of honor at what is touted as the world's first horror convention, to be held in San Francisco. (Even before it opens its doors to the public, picketers have set up camp outside the venue with signs making such claims as "Horror Stories may be Hazardous to your Health.") Unbeknownst to promoters and fans alike, their revered creature feature personality is actually a bona fide bloodsucker, and the self same killer who—aided by the immortalized Burke

and Hare—is responsible for a swathe of bloodshed that has authorities stumped and citizens nervous. Luckily for the concerned organizers, a helping hand shows up before things start getting too messy. Educating the unwary hosts about all things undead is The Avenger, an ex-Nazi hunter who has turned his attentions towards a more timeless monster for the last thirty years. It's up to the ragtag team to ensure that Malakai doesn't put the bite on the paying convention goers.



VHS box art for Nightmare in Blood (1985) Video City Productions #VC5055

Why this film has faded into almost complete obscurity is beyond me. Although not a groundbreaking piece of no budget cinema by any means, *Nightmare in Blood*—the only effort from noted horror historian John Stanley—is an engaging shocker that does not deserve the neglect it has received over the years. Luckily, it has been granted a second chance at life with a red carpet DVD release from Image Entertainment, which gives this overlooked film some much deserved and long overdue attention. (Having

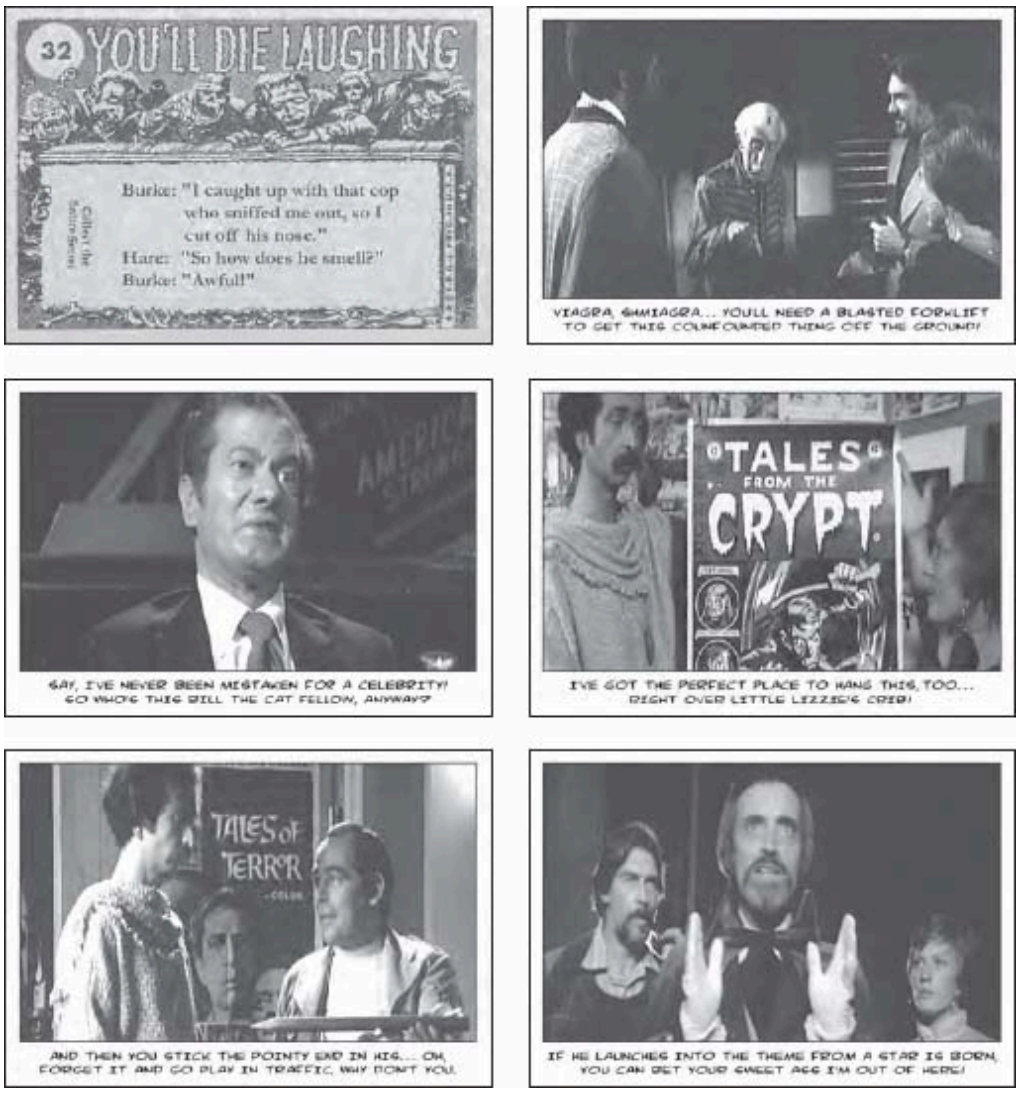
been unavailable for almost twenty years, the long out of print Video City release fetched a pretty penny on eBay when it did surface in years prior, as did the other, often unauthorized, releases.) In light of its modest successes, one can easily overlook the film's primitive production values. That said, the film is far from incompetent as many critics have claimed. (If many other productions made on twice the budget were half as good as *Nightmare in Blood,* then maybe they'd have a case.) Some of these reviewers may have come to this tenuous conclusion having watched only the first few minutes, which opens with the finale of a faux production called *The Zaroff Doom,* starring the fictional character actor Malakai. With its underexposed 8mm grain, tired stock music, over the top theatrics and painful anachronisms, this film-within-a-film clip boasts all the grandeur of an early Andy Milligan effort, but with less flair and sincerity. Once the actual film kicks in, the production values improve considerably, even if they still don't compare to the majors on a purely technical level. *Nightmare in Blood* succeeds, not because of this, but because of its enthusiasm.

First, the film—a loving and occasionally gory tribute to the horror genre as a whole—is primarily saved by its wits… or more specifically, its wit. Although some of the ideas are not particularly original, there is enough tongue in cheek humor to distract the viewer from the film's occasional forays into dime store horror. (Malakai's speech deconstructing the myth that vampires turn into bats by labeling it a ridiculous notion is worth the price of admission alone.) The abundance of film and comic references doesn't hurt matters either.

Second, the film makes for enjoyable social commentary, especially since many of the issues it pokes fun at are still pertinent (if not more so) today. In addition to the concerned citizens cluttering up the sidewalk outside the convention, *Nightmare in Blood* also features a very human nemesis, Professor Unworth, a pointedly conservative pop psychologist undoubtedly molded upon the infamous Dr Fredric Wertham (1895–1981). Unworth's bestselling treatise against horror fare, *Rape of the Young Mind*, is obviously a stab at Wertham's *Seduction of the Innocent* [Reinhart; 1954], a book that was paramount in the formation of the Comics Code Authority, and the eradication of EC Comics' entire horror line. Of more modern interest, Unworth also bears a striking resemblance to Dr Thomas E Radecki —an agenda driven Illinois psychiatrist who later became the director of the National Coalition on Television Violence—whose rabid attacks on horror

movies in the eighties were just as vitriolic and unfounded as his crusades against rock music, role playing games and other healthy teenage catharses.

Third, *Nightmare in Blood* is a virtual time capsule for the middle age horror aficionado. Obviously made before film and comic conventions became commonplace in the United States, those who weren't around for the fun in the early days can see what they used to be like. (As someone who attended his first fan convention in the late seventies, I can say they are a far cry from the semi annual events that have now lost much of their soul to crass merchandising.) The original one-sheet movie posters that wallpaper the converted theatre are a gold mine of vintage memorabilia guaranteed to make even the most avid trashfiend drool with envy. Furthermore, numerous key scenes take place within the famous San Francisco Comic Book Company storefront, one of the first such outlets to specialize in media collectibles, giving nostalgia hunters even more reason to pine for the good old days.


32
YOU'LL DIE LAUGHING
Burke: "I caught up with that cop who sniffed me out, so I cut off his nose."
Hare: "So how does he smell?"
Burke: "Awfull"
VIAGRA, SHMIAGRA... YOULL NEED A BLASTED FORKLIFT TO GET THIS COMEDIMPED THING OFF THE GROUND!
GAF, I'VE NEVER BEEN MISTAKEN FOR A CELEBRITY! SO WHOFS THIS BILL THE CAT FELLOW, ANYWAY?
TALES FROM THE CRYPT
I'VE GOT THE PERFECT PLACE TO HANG THIS, TOO... RIGHT OVER LITTLE LIZZIE'S CRIB!
TALES OF TERROR
AND THEN YOU STICK THE POINTY END IN HIS... OH, FORGET IT AND GO PLAY IN TRAFFIC, WHY DONT YOU.
IF HE LAUNCHES INTO THE THEME FROM A STAR IS BORN, YOU CAN GET YOUR SWEET ASS I'M OUT OF HERE!

Remember the You'll Die Laughing bubblegum cards with which many of us grew up? Well, I've taken the liberty to adapt some scenes from Nightmare in Blood to this ingratiating format because I thought it might be more, uhm, entertaining than just a handful of stills sans excruciating punch lines. Yeah, I know, I know… where's Forry when you need him?

To say that *Nightmare in Blood* is something of a labor of love is an understatement. Started in 1972, the film wasn't finished until 1976, whereupon it took another two years for it to get proper distribution. (One scene which takes place in the aforementioned comic book store makes it easy to date the film, as a copy of *The Vault of Evil* v1#8 is displayed on a rack of new releases, which was published in late 1974.) Its creators— Stanley and

co-screenwriter Davis—embarked on the film while carpooling to the *San Francisco Chronicle*, where they were both employed at the time. Even though the final budget of the film was $150,000, it is obvious that the money trickled in as the film was made, as many corners were cut in order to accommodate the production. The fact that the film succeeds in spite of these shortcomings speaks volumes.

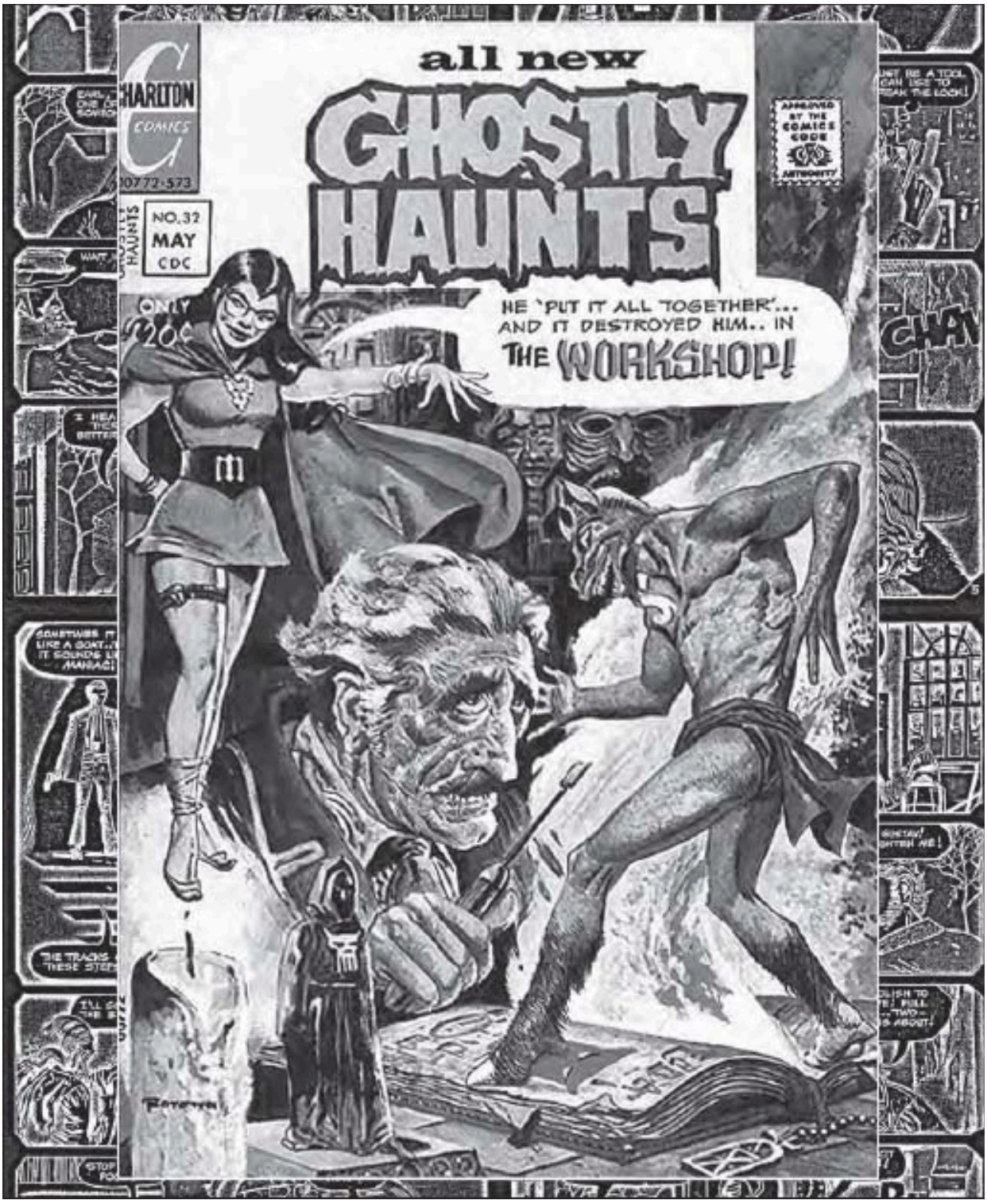
Although most of the actors had little prior experience, the cast as a whole does a commendable job, producing some very interesting characters. (Not the least of which is a black Sherlock Holmes enthusiast, played with grace by John Cochran, who even sports threads like his literary hero.) Some of the actors were of the struggling variety, having had uncredited bit parts in major productions; others had never stepped in front of a camera before this, and a few would try their hand at it again. Kerwin Mathews (1926–) who—starting with the titular role in *The 7th Voyage of Sinbad* (1958)—made a name for himself in action and fantasy films before he was reduced to appearing in such low rent shockers as *Octaman* (1971), *The Boy who Cried Werewolf* (1973) and the failed Dan Curtis television pilot *A Darkness at Blaisedon* (1968), which boasted several *Dark Shadows* alumni in the cast and crew. (Mathews plays the swashbuckling hero opposite Malakai in *The Zaroff Doom* excerpt.) This film also marks the screen debut of Oscar nominee Kathy Quinlan (1954–), and is one of the earliest screen appearances of Morgan Upton (1930–91), both actors making names for themselves in years to come. Ray Goman appeared in the obscure splatter flick *Warlock Moon* (1975) shortly thereafter. Not to be outdone in the trash horror department, Hy Pike (1935–) followed suit and showed up in *Lemora: A Child's Tale of the Supernatural* (1975) and *Spawn of the Slithis* (1978). Young horror fan Fred Dekker (1959–) would later take up filmmaking himself, directing such tongue in cheek homages as *Night of the Creeps* (1986) and *The Monster Squad* (1987). Director Stanley makes a cameo as a comic book geek. Stanley's predecessor on *Creature Features*, Wilkins, makes an appearance as well; although the actual sets for KXTL-TV's *Creature Features* doubles for the backdrop *of Nightmare in Blood's* fictional late night program *Fright Flicks* in which Malakai participates, the role of the host is instead filled by Upton.

The Fox Theatre in Oakland, California, which was used as the primary backdrop *of Nightmare in Blood* almost burned down during production due to arson, an unexpected turn of events that would deter most beginning

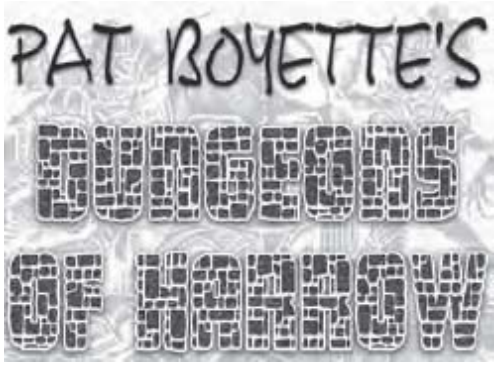
filmmakers. Those of a less skeptical nature might have construed this as a portent of the film's less than secure future, but others will see it as it was: another sign of the filmmakers' dedication and drive, even knowing that what they were creating would never be considered much more than a low budget exploitation film. And for this we can excuse them for Malakai's coffin, which is one of the silliest looking props to ever appear in a film of this ilk.

The DVD release of *Nightmare in Blood* from the always reliable Image Entertainment does a great service to the film with its new widescreen transfer, struck from the only surviving print of the film; although spotty—especially during the beginning and reel changes—the print is clean overall and far superior to the old pan and scan video release. Extras include an interesting commentary from Stanley and Davis, whose reminisces and trivia will please the hardcore trash film aficionado; several interviews, including one with the usually vapid Leonard Maltin; clips of Stanley during his stint as horror host on *Creature Features;* and a still gallery.

In the opinion of this biased horror film geek, *Nightmare in Blood* is worthy of the allotted fifteen minutes of fame it was previously denied.



Pat Boyette cover art for Ghostly Haunts V5#32 (May 1973) Charlton Comics



ARON ‘PAT’ BOYETTE made a name for himself in numerous fields — television broadcaster and published historian among them—but there are two fields in which he has rightfully earned a footnote in the annals of horror. The first, as a director, is quite modest, especially considering that of the three productions he helmed only one was a horror film. The second, as a comic book artist, has earned him respect by both peers and fans alike, although his output remained sorely underrated for many years.

Pat Boyette: Radio and Television Personality

BORN ON JULY 27, 1923 in San Antonio, Texas, Pat Boyette devoted much of his post adolescence to his first love, radio. Within years of graduating, he was a permanent fixture at WOAI, putting in sixty to seventy hours a week editing wire copy for the ten o’clock news in addition to less glamorous jobs too numerous to mention. Eventually, he worked his way up to news producer, and finally became an announcer and disk jockey, for which he became quite popular in the San Antonio area.

When WWII broke, he received a temporary draft deferment because of his position as a radio news announcer, but lost it when it wasn’t refilled. Luckily, much of Pat’s wartime contribution was relegated to the position of cryptographer. Once Berlin had fallen, he returned to the States and immediately secured a job with KONO. Even though he would always carry with him a passion for radio, his medium of choice soon shifted as television captured the public’s imagination, his own included. Because he was on the cusp of this new technology, and was one of the first people in the San Antonio area to be broadcast on one of “those glowing boxes,” Pat secured a

position as a television newscaster for WSTA-TV that he would hold for the better part of twenty years.

Pat Boyette: Filmmaker

BY THE TIME he decided to make his first film in 1962, he had already explored and mastered every aspect of the medium that was made available to him. With this wealth of technical knowledge at his disposal, and brandishing admiration for such maverick filmmakers as Roger Corman, Boyette tackled the task of independent filmmaking. Although he could foresee the ever growing demand for low budget movies to fill empty television time slots, he didn't anticipate the financial strain created by even the most inexpensively produced exploitation films, or the begging he would have to do to get his films even modestly distributed.

Boyette's directorial debut, *Dungeon of Harrow,* reflected the growing interest in gothic oriented horror fare. Obviously fond of the genre, Boyette injected as many staples into his script as the film's meager budget would allow, although it avoided anything of an outright supernatural nature. Many of these same themes would resurface in his comic book work years later.

Filmed in less than fourteen days, *Dungeon of Harrow* was for all intents and purposes written as they went along, with Pat writing what was to be filmed the following day after they broke that night for shooting. Applying the firsthand experience television had given him, Pat—in addition to directing and writing the film—functioned on all aspects of the production, including editing, scoring, and art direction. (The latter is not surprising, when one takes into account his future calling.) This not only helped to keep costs down, but also guaranteed him more control over the final product (a luxury he unwillingly sacrificed in his later films).

In some ways, *Dungeon of Harrow* far exceeds its miniscule budget, and is comparable to many of its more costly European counterparts. Unfortunately, an inexperienced stable of actors, and demands from the distributor to expand his seventy one minute production into a ninety one minute feature, makes the film much more of a chore to watch than it should be.

Lack of artistic control plagued his next two films *(The Weird Ones* and *No Man's Land,* both also filmed in 1962), and soon Boyette tired of his role as a filmmaker. (For the latter, the director's chair was pulled out from under

him and given to actor Russell Harvey, with Pat being credited only as co-producer when all was said and done.) Pat received what he felt was a sure sign to change vocations in 1962 when his house burned down with all his film equipment inside. (Save for the clappers, which—as the story goes—he tossed back into the engulfing flames.) Although this spelled the end of his career as an independent filmmaker, by no means is it the end of the story.

Broadcasting had lost much of its appeal to him by this time as a vocation, and the rigors of television were weighing on him almost as much as his stint in feature films. He sold a couple of scripts along the way, one for David L Hewitt's *The Girls from Thunder Strip* (1966), and another for the long running television police drama *Adam-12* (1968–75), but these did nothing to assuage his disillusionment with filmmaking.

"SLEEP CAME THAT NIGHT, BUT IT WAS PEOPLED BY CREATURES FROM NETHER-DARKNESS..CRAWLING - SCREAMING THINGS THAT SLITHERED FROM THAT GOLD MASK!"

Panel from the cover story "Royal Guest" Creepy #33 (June 1970) Warren Publishing

Pat Boyette: Comic Book Creator

AS A BOY during the depression era, Pat spent countless hours immersed in the newspaper comic strips that offered cheap entertainment to the downtrodden masses. They sparked within him an interest in sequential art that first surfaced in 1954 when he produced a regionally syndicated comic strip called Captain Flame. He attempted a return to the medium in the mid sixties when he found himself seeking out new avenues of employment that

would accommodate his overwhelming need for creative expression as well as pay the bills.

In 1966, having submitted some of his art samples to Charlton Comics the previous year, the publishing house's art director approached him with a seven page short story for their war series *The Fightin' Five* (1961–67). Suffice to say, Charlton was pleased with the product he turned in and a mutually beneficial working relationship was struck. Later that year, he illustrated the humorous sci fi story 'Spacious Rooms for Rent' for the very short-lived title *Shadows from Beyond*, which picked up the numbering from *Unusual Tales* (1955–65) and lasted only this one issue. Shortly thereafter, having tried his hand at several different genres within the comics field, Boyette had established himself as one of Charlton's premier horror artists alongside the likes of Steve Ditko and Tom Sutton. His work soon dominated many of the titles, and through much of the late sixties and early seventies, one could scarcely browse through a Charlton horror comic without finding one of the stories illustrated, lettered, and even written by Pat.

A particularly grisly panel from "The Entail" Eerie #30 (November 1970)
Warren Publishing

Pat's work was not necessarily exceptional, but he displayed a very distinct, sparse style that was very reminiscent of comic great Alex Toth (1928–). (Boyette's more inspired work utilized detailed line work and rich tones that helped to obfuscate any shortcomings he displayed as an artist.)

Probably the biggest reason that Boyette was one of the busiest artists in Charlton's stable, though, was that he was a consummate professional, never missing a deadline in the many years he produced comic stories. (Anecdotes about Pat saving the day turning in a job in record time and under considerable pressures are usually foremost when talking with writers and editors who have worked with him.) This discipline and determination was a carry over from his days in broadcasting, a field much less tolerant of tardiness than publishing.

Much like the other professional endeavors he had pursued over the years, he enjoyed his work, and resented it the minute it became more a job and less a means to express himself artistically; if it wasn't fun, he felt it just wasn't worth doing. His love for the horror genre—evident early on with his very first feature film—had never abated, so it is no surprise that he flourished within the pages of Charlton's horror titles. During this time, he also did some freelance work for other companies, but was unhappy with the attitudes held by many of these larger publishing houses. Although he produced a handful of horror stories for DC—a strained relationship, from most accounts—he also pulled a few stints for such magazine publishers as newcomers Skywald and Atlas.

It is interesting to note that, despite the fact Boyette preferred working for Charlton, his most inspired, most lavish work was produced for the magazine publishers. By far, his best work was for Warren Publishing. He began freelancing for them after ghosting some pieces for regular Warren contributor Rocco 'Rocky' Mastrose-rio, who passed away in 1968. Although Pat has been quoted as saying he relished working for Jim Warren's company—since they used most everything he sent them and gave him an autonomy most other publishers could not afford—he produced only an occasional story for them over the course of their four years, presumably because of the artistic demands these pieces required.

AT A BEACH ON ONE OF THE OUTER ISLANDS OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS, A HONEYMOONING COUPLE WERE SWIMMING IN THE CRYSTAL CLEAR WATERS... IT WAS A SHELTERED LAGOON - FREE OF SHARKS OR BARRACUDA, SO LILA AND JEFF MINTON WERE EXPLORING THEIR UNDERWATER WORLD WITHOUT FEAR...
BUT...THIS WAS A MISTAKE FOR THERE WAS EVIL LURKING IN THAT INNOCENT - SEEMING WONDERLAND!, AS A SHADOWY FIGURE EELED BETWEEN TWO CORAL HEADS AND SWAM TOWARD THE GIRL...
EDITOR...GEORGE WILDMAN
WRITER...JOE GILL
SATAN'S POOLS
OH, NO!

An innovator in his own right, here Boyette adapts a sideways page layout for Joe Gill's story "Satan's Pools" from Ghost Manor V2#16 (December 1973) Charlton Comics

By the mid seventies, Boyette no longer strayed from Charlton's stable, for which he continued to work until they closed up shop in 1984. Sadly, by this time his work had deteriorated, a far cry from his output when he first signed on eighteen years previously. Still, his signature style had become synonymous with Charlton horror, much like the aforementioned Ditko and Sutton. In 1980, he was the winner of the San Diego Con Inkpot Award.

Pat continued to illustrate comic books and syndicated strips in the years that followed, as well as contribute his talents to the field of animation, but as time passed he would focus most of his energies on another of his loves, namely the state in which he had primarily lived his whole life: Texas. Boyette authored *Texas: Days of Glory* [Eakin Publications; 1998], an illustrated history book for children that traces the history of the state from the arrival of the first Spanish soldiers to the Texas revolution. On January 14, 2000, Pat succumbed to cancer after an extended bout of pneumonia in Fort Worth, Texas, about 250 miles north of the city of San Antonio where he had lived for most of his life. From interviews conducted in the last few years before his death, one can tell that he not only had few regrets about the

various paths his interests had taken him, he also seemed to count his blessings that he was given the opportunity to make a living doing the things he loved most.

Pat Boyette: In Memorial

THE ONLY THING that preceded Pat Boyette the artist was Pat Boyette the man. Everyone who had known or worked alongside him remembered him with respect and affection. Despite his many and varied accomplishments, he remained a modest and self effacing individual. He had made innumerable friends in the comics field, most of whom he kept in regular contact with, and many a comic book personality has fond memories of long hours spent talking with Pat over the phone throughout the years. Despite his intense commitment and strong work ethics, no one interviewed has ever said anything bad about the man. The only thing more important to him than his work was his family: his wife of fifty four years, Bette, and his daughter Melissa.

In the last few years, there has been a surge of interest in Boyette and his work, due in part to the rising market demand for Charlton's publications and other vintage horror comics. In response to the growing enthusiasm, a collection of his comic book stories was published as *Night-stand Horrors* (Vanguard Productions; 2004), which showcased some slices of Boyette's cutting edge work. Debatably an important figure in the history of the horror genre as a whole, one would be hard pressed to say that the contributions Aaron 'Pat' Boyette made during the sixties and seventies didn't have at least some impact on the medium of comics.

DUNGEON OF HARROW (1962)

> Herts-Lion [US] DIR: Aaron Boyette (aka Pat Boyette) PRO: Russell Harvey and Don Russell
>
> SCR: Aaron Boyette (aka Pat Boyette) and Henry Garcia DOP: James C Houston EXP: Bobby O'Donnell MFX: Henry Garcia
>
> MUS: Pat Boyette (aka Patrick Aron) STR: Aaron Boyette (aka Pat Boyette), Michele Buquor, Henry Garcia, Eunice Grey, Maurice

Harris, Russell Harvey, Helen Hogan, William McNulty, Lee Morgan, Don Russell and Leon Schumacher Jr.

AKA: *Calabazos del Horror* [Chamber of Horror]

Dungeons of Horror

Approximately 91m; Color; Unrated

DVD: *Dungeon of Harrow* [Alpha Video; 74m; FS; NTSC R0]

IT IS 1870: the only survivors of a shipwreck, the ship's captain and his prestigious guest Aaron Fallon (Russell Harvey), are washed ashore a remote island that is home to one Lorente de Sade (William McNulty). Count de Sade (last name rhymes with 'regrade') lives in his transported castle with his Nubian manservant, Mantis (Maurice Harris); Ann (Michelle Buquor), a mute girl who is unable to speak out against the Count's abuse; and Cassandra (Helen Hogan), a nurse who once treated de Sade's sick wife. Unbeknownst to the unexpected guests, their host was exiled to the island with his leprous bride, and in his madness is struggling with a sadistic streak a mile wide. (Didn't the name give it away?) Before long, the wounded captain (Lee Morgan) is dragged into the Count's dungeon for some extracurricular fun and games; the mad master of ceremonies has a pathological hatred of pirates, with whom he believes the captain is in league. So, it is up to Fallon to save his friend whilst giving aid to the Count's enslaved housemates.

Although truly admirable in its attempts to make an exotic period piece on the most miniscule of budgets, *Dungeon of Harrow* is an often weighty affair that—if not watched in the wee hours of the morning—is best experienced immediately following any dental appointment that involves Novocain. (Although styles differ drastically, the end results are not unlike those of Andy Milligan's lurid Victorian efforts.) The film overcomes some of its shortcomings through sheer determination, but it is ultimately dragged down by the cumbersome performances and stilted dialogue, Boyette's narration withstanding.

The worst onscreen culprit is our dull and ineffectual hero as portrayed by Harvey, whose application of the dramatic pause is enough to make William Shatner wince, and whose inability to emote borders on catatonic.

When asked his thoughts about *Dungeon of Harrow,* Boyette has often attributed some of the films failing to the poor—albeit predetermined—casting of his leading man. It should come as no surprise to anyone who has witnessed his talents that the only reason Harvey produced the film was because he wanted to be in front of the camera. Having endured his performance in *Dungeon of Harrow,* I can comfortably say that the only way he could fulfill his calling as an actor was to pay someone off as he did here. (He bribed Boyette in a similar fashion two years later with *No Man's Land,* which proved to be their last collaboration.) To make things worse, this character rightly deserves whatever insidious fate befalls him. When confronted with the disappearance of his shipmate, a trail of blood in the missing man's wake, our hero seems barely perturbed and quickly gives up his search for a moonlit stroll with the resident nurse. When the wounded captain attempts to save his comrade by throwing himself into a life and death struggle with de Sade's indentured servant, our oh-so-intrepid hero stands by dumbly and watches his friend get skewered. But when the Count's leprous wife steals a kiss from Aaron, our hero begins screaming like a frightened schoolgirl, his hair turning white from the traumatic shock.

DVD box art for Dungeon of Harrow (2002) Alpha Video Distributors, Inc. #4084-D

As if to offer a counter balance, the Count as portrayed by McNulty chews the scenery with as much gusto as any cut rate thespian could muster for minimum wage and his name up in lights. The character's turgid struggle with his bedeviled id results in perturbing hallucinations, including a manifestation of his own darker half, "a product of his evil, a reflection of his madness", that taunts him for a few moments before dropping a giant laugh-out-loud spider in his lap. (It doesn't seem like it should be much of a struggle for the old chap by this point, as he's obviously been quite open in the expression of his sadistic tendencies for years with little or no remorse.) The other actors aren't nearly as polar in their extremes, although the only face with any real talent and/or experience is Morgan (1902–67), who plays the fairly likeable captain. As an actor (often uncredited), Morgan had appeared in over forty films since 1943, most of those westerns. (He also showed up in Boyette's sexy sci fi flick *The Weird Ones* the same year.) On the flip side, Harris is thankfully given only a handful of lines. It is probably safe to assume that, as a basketball player for one of the Harlem Globetrotters' subsidiary teams, he was much more adept on court than he was on stage. One might think Harvey only gave Harris a part so that *he* could upstage at least one of the other cast members. It almost worked.

Mexican lobby card for Dungeon of Harrow (1962) Distribuidora Rivero

The contrived script displays little originality, but remains somewhat engaging *because* it combines so many different elements. Of course, this necessitates that the narrative sacrifice logic for convenience. Once the character of Ann is no longer of any use to the script, she dies from a Chinese water torture session having been subjected to it for less than twenty four hours. Later, the Count's manservant is rudely discarded simply because he wants to take a breather during the 'climactic' chase scene, making it feasible for Aaron to take out de Sade on his own. (And God knows our hero needs all the help he can get.) The viewer may get the impression that they are watching a live action comic book—no surprise considering the man in charge of the production. Not only is the stilted dialogue more suited for the printed page—one can almost see the word balloons floating about the heads of the players—many a scene is even framed like a comic panel, with the camera only moving when absolutely necessary. So much does it feel like a piece one would find buried in the pages of Scary Tales or The Many Ghosts of Dr Graves, I now expect to find a four-color version of Dungeon of Harrow every time I flip through the pages of an old Charlton comic.

Trashfiends will probably get a kick out of such awkward contrivances, but will get more mileage out of the unintentional humor that pervades the film. "These halls get quite drafty," a nonchalant Cassandra warns Aaron as they step into a corridor that one would swear doubled as an actual wind tunnel, if the gale that accosts them is any indication.

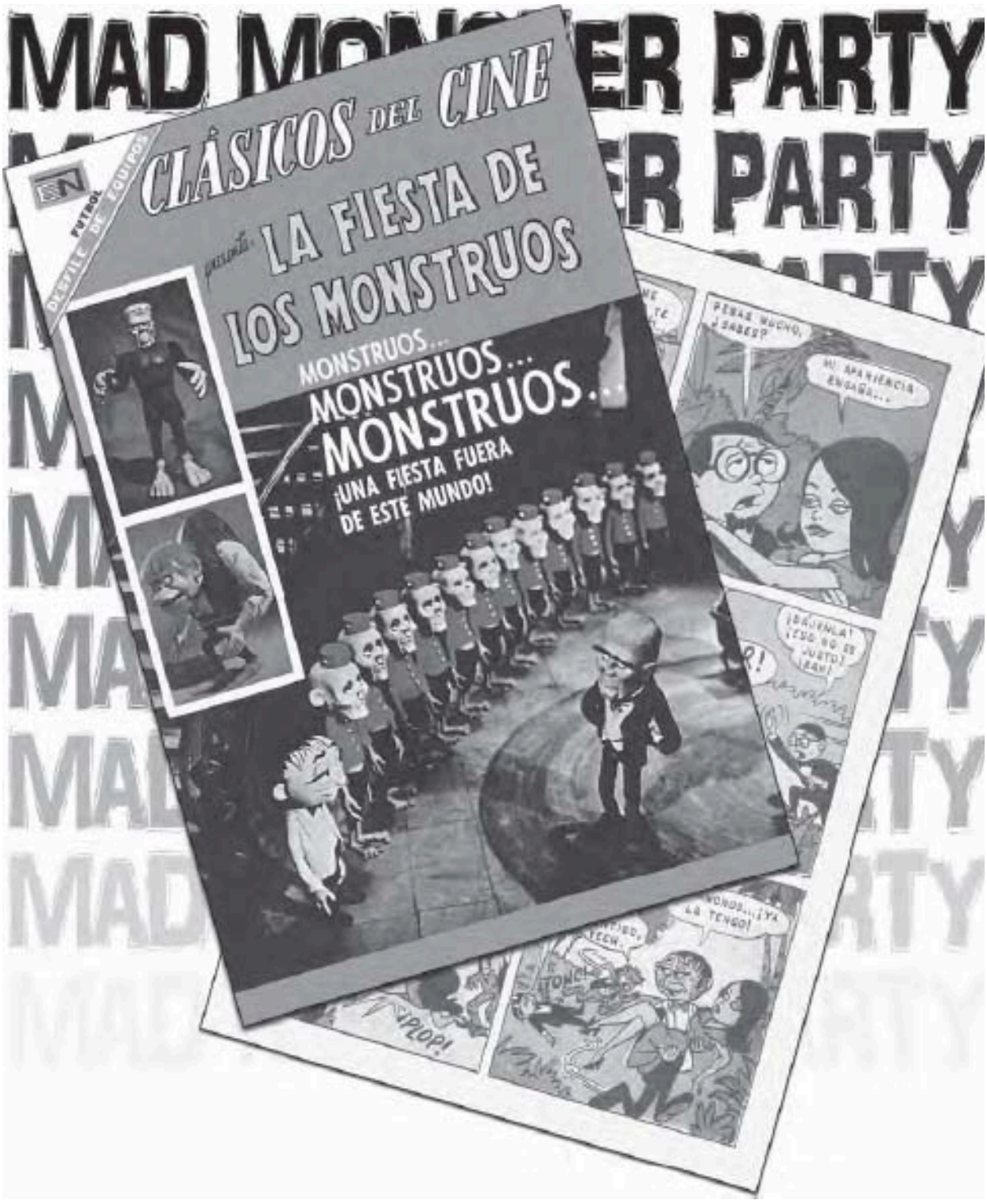
Stock music and strained deliveries aside, the film succeeds in creating a modicum of tension with its claustrophobic atmosphere and gloomy set pieces. (If only the miniatures used for some of the exterior shots held up nearly as well.) Although some reviewers have overemphasized the 'bone chilling' meeting between our impotent hero and his host's disease ridden spouse, it is somewhat effective as far as dime store spook show fare goes, as is the twist ending that may catch a few people off guard (if only because it seems a bit unlikely).

On occasion, *Dungeon of Harrow* resembles the lower rent gothic Eurotrash from the time, and is similarly engaging when it succeeds. More often than not, though, the film comes across as an ambitious but tedious stage production captured on film for the sake of posterity. Being his first

film and only horror effort, it would have been interesting to see what Boyette could have accomplished as a filmmaker with more means at his disposal and a few more years of experience under his belt; being a consummate professional in his many other endeavors, the results would have been promising. As it stands, this effort is a testament to the unfortunate fact that just because a creator brandishes exceptional comic book storytelling abilities does not necessarily mean they will do equally well when their talents are applied to cinema the first time out.

In 2002, *Dungeon of Harrow* saw its first DVD release; although a sell-through, it is now reaching a whole new generation of fans who never found access to the copies released by several public domain video outlets in the years previous. It is hard not to laugh at its claim of being an underground classic, but it is an interesting enough curiosity to merit such a release.

❑ Pat Boyette: selected horror comic checklist, see page 279



Mexican comic book adaptation of Mad Monster Party? (June 1968)
Clássicos del Cine

MOST PEOPLE who grew up in the last thirty odd years are undoubtedly familiar with the works of Rankin and Bass, even if the names of the films' creators elude them. Many of us waited in anticipation every holiday season for the clockwork broadcasts *of Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer* (1964) and *Santa Claus is Coming to Town* (1970), even if our youthful diets consisted primarily of creature features. (For us monster fans, our fondness for Bumble the Abominable Snow Monster in the former, and Winter Warlock in the latter, was probably greater than that reserved for the films' heroes, but that doesn't make these specials any less nostalgic.) Shown much more infrequently than those yuletide staples were two other Rankin and Bass productions devoted to our favorite screen monsters of yesteryear. The first, *Mad Monster Party?* (1967) was a theatrical release filmed in the studio's patented Animagic process. The second, *Mad, Mad, Mad Monsters* (1972), was a much shorter, straight to television effort filmed utilizing more traditional cell animation. Even though these two films share numerous similarities, the stories are unrelated, and the characters mostly variations on shared archetypes. The superior of the two, *Mad Monster Party?*, has achieved a richly deserved cult status, whereas the forgotten *Mad, Mad, Mad Monsters* still languishes in semi obscurity. (At the time of writing, the latter

has had only two videocassette releases, and remained out of print for the better part of sixteen years.)

ORIGINAL SOUND TRACK and MUSIC from
RUDOLPH THE RED NOSED REINDEER
A VIDEOCRAFT TV MUSICAL SPECTACULAR
featuring the voice of
BURL IVES
JOHNNY MARKS

US soundtrack LP for Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer (1964) MCA Records #MCA-15003

Having firmly entrenched themselves into North American pop culture, it is interesting that it took so long for the films of Rankin and Bass to be elevated to a status beyond mere kiddie fare. Merchandising devoted to their timeless characters; re-mastered DVDs of their classics made available to serious aficionados in deluxe editions; countless articles and even a book devoted to their efforts… the demand for Rankin and Bass is there. No longer relegated to the young, this demand is now driven by their parents who also hold the same—if not greater—appreciation for the films, and the merchandising boom that is always quick to take advantage of the public's nostalgic yearnings.

Forget about that whiny, self-absorbed reindeer, Bumble was the real star of Rankin & Bass' Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer (1964). C'mon, have you ever seen anything more adorable? I thought not… Bumble Action Figure (2000) Playing Mantis, Inc.

The Men Behind the Clay

JULES BASS (1935–) had previously worked for a New York advertising agency when, in the early sixties, he and Arthur Rankin Jr formed Videocraft International, which would later become the more personable Rankin/Bass Productions. Unlike Bass, Rankin was born into showbusiness, his father being an actor who appeared in over 100 films during the twenties and thirties. After working as an art director for ABC-TV from 1948 to 1952, Rankin Jr struck out on his own and eventually met up with his soon-to-be partner.

In 1961, Rankin and Bass kicked off their thirty five year business association with *Tales of the Wizard of Oz*, an animated television series consisting of 150 episodic shorts based on the popular children's books by L Frank Baum. In 1964, they produced their first feature length effort, *Return to Oz*, a follow up to their made for television series. Although well received, third time out was a charm, for in the same year they collaborated on what would become their most lasting film, *Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer.*

One of the things that made this feature stand out was that, instead of using traditional cell animation, Rankin and Bass brought the story to life through Animagic, a form of stop motion animation using clay. (Despite the

catchy name, it was essentially the same process employed by such animators as Willis O'Brien, George Pal and Ray Harryhausen in their fantasy and sci fi films over the previous few decades, but less sophisticated.) Their distinct style matched with this rarely used technique gave these films a look and feel all their own. They would not only uphold these standards, but also improve upon their craft as they continued to produce their all ages holiday special in the years to come.

Videocraft International Goes Ape

PARODIES OF the classic screen monsters had become immensely marketable by the mid sixties; everything from Bobby 'Boris' Pickett's top forty hit The Monster Mash to prime time television's *The Addams Family* to Topps' enduring *Monster Laffs* trading cards attest to the steadily growing interest. Although Dracula and the Wolfman had lost most of their bite, these and other enduring bogeymen had become popular not just with children but also with teens, thus monsters became peripherally associated with the growing counterculture. America's disenfranchised youth were drawn to such fictional outcasts, even going so far as to embrace the label of 'freaks' in order to separate themselves from the more conservative generations. They, like the monsters, were the outsiders being castigated for their non conformity. Monsters were the ultimate rebels. But they still made for great kiddie fare.

Rankin and Bass' first real monster effort was the Saturday morning cartoon *The King Kong Show* (1966), produced for ABC. It never made it to a second season. This half hour program included two eight minute episodes of 'King Kong' and one of 'Tom of T.H.U.M.B.'. In the titular cartoons, a precocious boy, Billy Bond, befriends the oversized ape and together they fend off various human villains who threaten their remote island hideaway. (The voice of Billy was supplied by Billie Mae Richards (1921–), who also supplied her vocal talents to the dubbed American version of *Daikaijû Gamera* (1965) and the 1967 *Spider-Man* animated series, but is most noted for portraying Rudolph himself in Rankin and Bass' animated feature.) For character design, Videocraft International hired Jack Davis (1924–), who prior to *The King Kong Show* had produced the poster art for Rankin and Bass' *Willie McBean.* A legend in the comic field, many fans know him primarily for his work for EC Comics' *The Haunt of Fear* (1950–54), *Tales*

from the Crypt (1950–55) and *The Vault of Horror* (1950–55), although he spent much of the sixties illustrating record sleeves (mostly soundtracks and comedy albums) and one-sheet movie posters. The animation itself was produced by Toei Company, Ltd, whom many *kaijû eiga* fans will recognize as the Japanese studio that brought us the Gamera films. Unable to capture Davis' wonderful style as later Videocraft productions, it instead bore more of a resemblance to such imports as *Mahha Gô Gô Gô* (1967) aka *Speed Racer.*

This short-lived Saturday morning series was responsible for Rankin and Bass' involvement with the theatrical film *Kingukongu no Gyakushu* (1967) aka *King Kong Escapes*, produced by Toei's rivals, Toho Studios. Like *The King Kong Show,* this live action Japanese-American co-production displayed all of Toho's telltale earmarks, but few of Rankin and Bass'. A sequel to *Kingukongu tai Gojira* (1962) aka *King Kong vs Godzilla,* the English dubbed American version *of Kingukongu no Gyakushu* featured several recognizable voices, not the least of which was the talented and versatile Paul H Frees (1920–86). (Hearing the Burgermeister Meisterburger's voice coming from an evil Japanese super villain named Dr Who intent on taking over the world is something of a head turner, I assure you.) Unavailable except as bootleg compilations for many years, the complete run of *The King Kong Show* was finally officially released on DVD during the 2005 holiday season, a strategic marketing ploy by Sony Video to cash in on the much anticipated theatrical premiere of Peter Jackson's epic remake of *King Kong.*

The Monster Mash, Animagic Style

RANKIN AND BASS' foremost creature feature, *Mad Monster Party?,* was produced the same year. With artist Jack Davis, writer Harvey Kurtzman (1924–93) and such gifted voice actors as Allen Swift already on board, they also employed the talents of aging horror veteran Boris Karloff né William

Henry Pratt (1887–1969), and Phyllis Diller née Phyllis Ada Driver (1917–). This was Rankin and Bass' third outing with Embassy Pictures and executive producer Joseph E Levine (1905–87), who was struggling to make it in the family market and realized Videocraft could be his ticket. Described by Arthur Rankin as "a colorful fellow," Levine's résumé includes every thing from Italian sword and sandal epics to adult dramas to the granddaddy of all *kaijû eiga* films, *Kaijû o Gojira* (1966) aka *Godzilla, King of the Monsters!* Unfortunately, *Mad Monster Party?* was the third outing in a three picture deal made between Levine and Videocraft in 1965; reportedly, the producer was disappointed with the receipts from *The Daydreamer* (1966) and thus didn't give the other two films the promotion they needed in order to be successful at the box office, despite the modest critical acclaim it accrued.

KING KONG
ESCAPES!
ALL NEW!
"KING KONG ESCAPES" RHODES REASON
LINDA MILLER · MIE HAMA · AKIRA TAKARADA
A TOHO CO., LTD. PICTURE · A UNIVERSAL RELEASE in TECHNICOLOR®

US lobby card for Kingukongu no Gyakushu (1956) Universal Pictu

One can only speculate why this film did not acquire the phenomenal cult status seemingly allotted the perennial Christmas favorites. The poor promotion not only contributed to its short run and limited bookings, it also seemed to disregard its target audience. Teenagers determined the success or failure of most theatrical films at the time it was released, and it was the pimple squad that would have appreciated this film most, with its countercultural leanings and sexual undercurrents.

The film may also have had more of a lasting impact had television given it the same holiday treatment as its yuletide counterparts. *Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer* and its ilk would be aired in the weeks before Christmas without fail, ritualizing them for the television viewers and establishing a ready made audience; why *Mad Monster Party?* wasn't given an annual slot in the days prior to Halloween in many broadcasting areas is a mystery. After its initial theatrical run, the film would only occasionally pop up on television during the seventies, but rarely during prime time, and rarely in October. It seemed all but forgotten until the eighties, when it finally started to make the holiday rounds, thanks to the proliferation of cable television and their need for material untouched by conventional broadcasting.

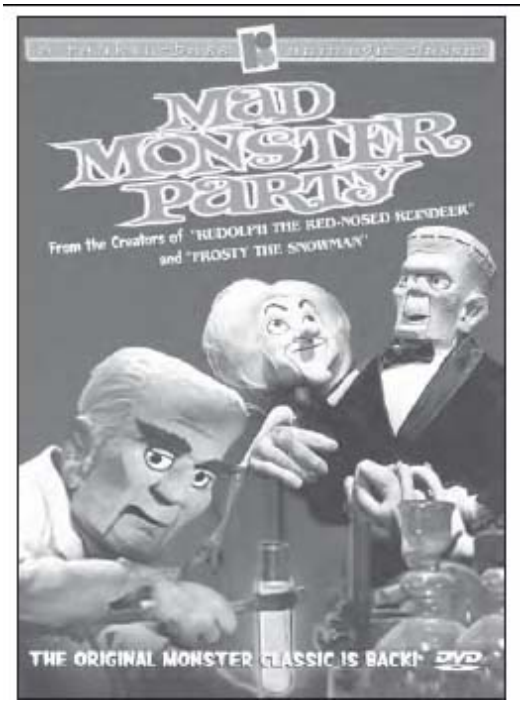
Neither was there much in the way of memorabilia for *Mad Monster Party?*—another regrettable byproduct of the stingy promotion. Aside from theatrical ephemera, merchandising was practically nonexistent. A soundtrack was produced by RCA Victor Records intended to coincide with the film's initial release, but only a handful of test pressings exist; the film's soundtrack did not reach the consumer market until 1998—almost thirty years after the fact—when it was released on CD by Retrograde Records, a small outfit specializing in film scores.

Dell Publishing, an established comic book publisher later bought out by Whitman's subsidiary Gold Key, released a comic adaptation *of Mad Monster Party?* in 1967 under its Movie Classics line. (This Dell imprint, which lasted from 1963 to 1969, also released tie ins for such shockers as *Die, Monster, Die!*, *Two on a Guillotine*, and *The Valley of Gwangi* as well as several of Roger Cor-man's Edgar Allan Poe adaptations.) This comic took some serious artistic license with the film's script, particularly with its replacement of the giant gorilla, It, with an overstuffed gill man. Ultimately, the art is crudely rendered and the script stripped of any real wit, so the comic boasts none of the charm inherent in Rankin and Bass' production.

Five years after *Mad Monster Party?*, Rankin and Bass took a stab at similar material. Forgoing theatres and modeling clay altogether, *Mad, Mad, Mad Monsters* was aired. Just long enough to fill an hour time slot (with commercials), this cartoon brought back many of the monsters featured in the previous effort. Obviously intended for a younger target audience, this animated feature boasts some of the same charms as its predecessor. Unfortunately, this made for television film was aired even more infrequently in many areas.

Panel from the Mexican comic adaptation of Mad Monster Party? (June 1968) Clâssicos del Cine

Probably due to the less than stellar response, they shunned monsters thereafter, save for the mythological beasties that would show up in such fantasy efforts as their adaptations of JRR Tolkien's *The Hobbit* (1977) and *The Return of the King* (1980). (The one real exception being their 'Mini Monsters' segments for *The Comic Strip* (1987), but these have become even more obscure than their earlier efforts, and rightfully so.) In 1996, Rankin and Bass parted ways, leaving little hope that the longstanding studio will ever produce another Animagic effort, let alone one featuring their distinct interpretations of our favorite movie monsters. But with the re-mastered release *of Mad Monster Party?* in 2003, one hopes they will now be remembered for more than just their animated stocking stuffers.


Mad Monster Party
From the Creators of "RUDOLPH THE RED-NOSED REINDEER" and "FROSTY THE SNOWMAN"
THE ORIGINAL MONSTER CLASSIC IS BACK!
DVD

DVD box art for Mad Monster Party? (2005) Anchor Bay Entertainment #DV13972

MAD MONSTER PARTY? (1967)

Embassy Pictures Corporation [US] Videocraft International [US] DIR: Jules Bass PRO Arthur Rankin Jr. SCR: Len Korobkin and Harvey Kurtzman DOP: Tad Mochinaga EXP: Joseph E Levine MUS: Maury Laws SND: *Mad Monster Party?* [Retrograde Records; CD] STR: Phyllis Ada Driver (aka Phyllis Diller), Ethel Ennis, Gale Garnett, William Henry Pratt (aka Boris Karloff) and Allen Swift

AKA: *La Fiesta de los Monstruos* [The Party of the Monsters]

Approximately 95m; Color; Unrated

DVD: *Mad Monster Party* [Anchor Bay Entertainment; 95m; FS; NTSC R1]

VHS: *Mad Monster Party* [Anchor Bay Entertainment; 95m; FS; NTSC] [Embassy Home Entertainment; 94m; FS; NTSC]

ADL: “It’s the Silliest Party of the Year… and you’re all Invited!”

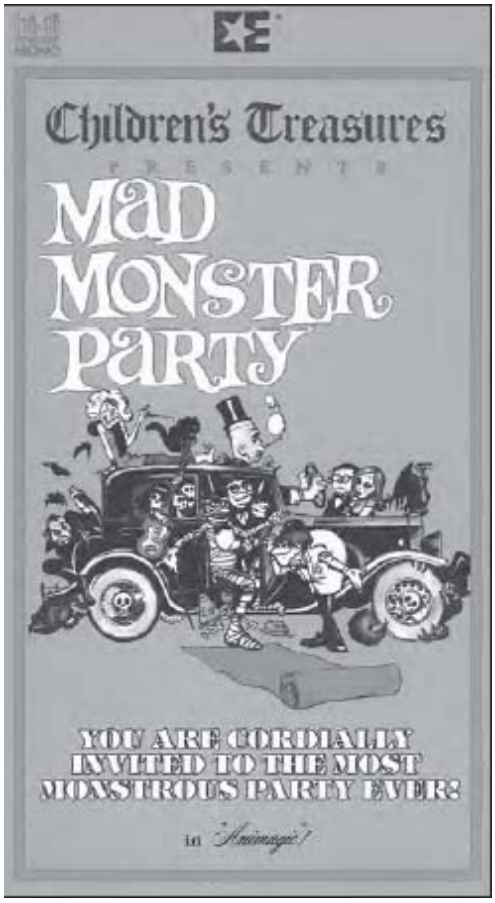
HAVING BECOME bored with creating life, Baron Boris von Frankenstein has created death in the form of antimatter. To commemorate his success, he decides to hold a swinging get together at his castle on the remote Caribbean Island of Evil. Invited to the bash are all his monster buddies, including Dracula, the Werewolf, the Mummy, Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, the Creature (not quite of the *Black Lagoon* variety, but close), the Hunchback of Notre Dame, and the Invisible Man. (Not invited this time out is It, a Kong sized ape who apparently slaughtered a horde of live boars with his bare hands at the previous shindig.) Already residing with the mad doctor are Fang (his poorly named and henpecked patchwork creation); the monster’s main squeeze (the scariest of the lot, because she not only sounds like but also *looks* like Phyllis Diller); Frankenstein’s busty, redheaded, ultimately conniving assistant Francesca; a battalion of incompetent zombie henchman dressed as bell boys; and the undead Yetch, a Peter Lorre like gofer who—quite literally—loses his head at the slightest provocation. (After being grounded by his boss for poor avionic skills, the optimistic Yetch tells himself, “I should be happy that I still have my sickness.”) Also on the guest list is Felix Flankin, Frankenstein’s nebbish nephew who schleps his days in a pharmacy selling “Veeflefetzers”; the myopic Felix, though, is completely unaware of his colorful heritage. Francesca finds out that Felix, an aspiring chemist, is to be her employer’s sole heir (“I may have the blood for the job, but I sure don’t have the stomach for it,” Felix later confides), so she decides to set things straight and—with Dracula and the Werewolf’s aid—make short work of the unwary klutz. Fang’s bride is similarly peeved about the show of favoritism towards Flankin, creating further rifts between the partygoers.

Although Rankin and Bass considered this to be one of their lesser efforts (so much so that the original negative for the film was allowed to deteriorate through sheer neglect), *Mad Monster Party?* holds up extremely well, even against their more universally loved films. One of their earliest claymation efforts, *Mad Monster Party?* is very ‘cinematic,’ more so than most of their productions. The cinematography is comparatively epic, having

avoided the claustrophobic but homey feel Animagic films usually evoke, and is visually impressive despite the occasionally clunky animation.

Maury Laws' music isn't nearly as infectious as that found in the Christmas specials, although one number, Stay One Step Ahead, would make a perfect companion piece to One Foot In Front Of The Other from *Santa Claus is Coming to Town*. Fans of sixties trash horror will appreciate the music far more than the average Rankin and Bass fan, as it evokes the themes that could be found punctuating such shows as *The Munsters* (1964–66) and *The Ghost and Mr Chicken* (1966). Furthermore, the partygoers are treated to the sounds of Little Tibia and the Phibbeans, a long haired group of skeletons that play generic mid sixties psychedelic garage rock that wouldn't sound terribly out of place performed by the Saturday morning cartoon outfit The Groovie Goolies.

Even though the clichéd jokes have a certain dated charm about them, one may quickly tire of the groan inducing one-liners and drawn out sight gags (particularly in the case of one sequence that has the monsters either sleeping off the bash, or trying to deal with their brethren's snoring). Similarities to *Mad* magazine are quite apropos, when one discovers it was written by Harvey Kurtzman, one of EC's premier humor writers. There are rumors that Forrest J Ackerman (1916–2008) *of Famous Monsters of Filmland* fame, was an uncredited co-writer on the film, but they have not been substantiated. (If it is true, we could probably attribute, nay, *blame* many of the painful wordplays on him; anyone raised on the seminal monster magazine will cringe at remembrances of the editor's more excruciating puns. Forry, we love you dearly and hold you in the highest regard, and always will, but some things should just be illegal.) Some of the best jokes involve Yetch's unrequited love for the seemingly frigid Francesca, and it is disappointing that tired slapstick is often favored over more inspired scenes like this.



VHS box art for Mad Monster Party? (1985) Embassy Home Entertainment #2077

Much of the film's strength lies in the amazing designs by comic artist Jack Davis, another EC veteran and *Mad* contributor. Davis' comic interpretations of the classic film monsters are amusing whilst retaining a certain dignity usually lost in such spoofs; this talent is what made much of his work for *Mad* so timeless. Furthermore, his distinct style makes a successful transition from the drawing board to film, as the animators had the smarts and sensibility to remain true to his designs as much as possible.

Like a deer caught in Francesca's headlights, Yetch professes his profound love for the busty redhead. Still from Mad Monster Party? (1967) Embassy Pictures Corp./Videocraft International

Complementing the designs are the gifted vocal actors. Karloff's presence grounds the film in classic monster cinema like no one else could. (He had previously worked with Rankin and Bass as a voice actor on their first collaboration with producer Levine, *The Daydreamers.)* Unfortunately, the ailing, crippled actor would pass away a few years later having appeared in a handful of Mexican low budget horror flicks. Stand up comedian Diller gives the film a certain edge as well, offering a counterbalance to Karloff's more subtle deliveries. (As a running gag in her comedy routines, Diller often refers to her fictional husband as Fang; whether or not this joke preceded *Mad Monster Party?* or was instead inspired by it, I do not know.) Animagic mainstay Allen Swift supplies voices for most of the other monsters; he does a fairly admirable job emulating the late Peter Lorre (1904–64) in his portrayal of Frankenstein's kickboy Yetch. Last but not least are Ethel Ennis (1932–) and Gale Garnett (1942–), the latter of whom was an RCA Victor recording artist with the oft covered top forty hit We'll Sing In The Sunshine to her credit.

Another facet that makes *Mad Monster Party?* interesting is that, despite being a film aimed at a younger audience, it boasts not only a fair number of sexual innuendos, but also displays some coy yet pervasive sexism. The heroine, Francesca, is a strong willed and ruthless (read: frigid) woman who eventually thaws and falls head over heels for her sworn

nemesis after he gallantly rescues her. (Their love is apparently cinched after Felix slaps her around in order to quell her hysteria. Now if that isn't old world sexual politics, I don't know what is.) Of course, had the film been made today, Francesca wouldn't be sporting such tremendous headlights (even though it would be more realistic in light of our country's rampant silicone abuse), and the catfight scene between her and the monster's mate (dubbed over with the sounds of real cats going at it tooth and nail) would probably be handled with a little more tact.

Originally tagged with the working title *The Monster Movie,* it was later changed to include the word 'mad' to cash in on Davis and Kurtzman's association with the magazine of the same name, according to Animagic historian Rick Goldschmidt in his book *The Enchanted World of Rankin & Bass* [Tiger Mountain Press, 1997]. Included in the same book is the original one-sheet poster art proposed by Jack Davis, which—instead of having the title replaced and the art recycled—was simply scrapped. (Also featured are Davis' original character designs and numerous behind the scenes photos.) On the same note, noted fantasy artist Frank Frazetta (who also painted some of the best covers for Warren's watershed horror magazines *Creepy, Eerie* and *Vampirella)* was responsible for several unsigned pre-production illustrations, one of which was used as the final one-sheet poster art… without his consent, it seems.

Fans subjected to the previous VHS release of this film will be overjoyed and undoubtedly awestruck by the recent *Mad Monster Party?* DVD. Not unlike their groundbreaking restoration of *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), Anchor Bay Entertainment has given this film a much needed overhaul; so impressive are their efforts, it may even change the opinions of those philistines who were previously unimpressed with *Mad Monster Party?* According to Anchor Bay, their version was restored from the original 35mm elements… and, jinkies, does it show. One has to wonder if it looked this good in the theatres forty years ago. The muddy, washed out print previously in circulation gave the impression the film only had a limited palette of colors at its disposal, and that its underexposure was somehow intentional. Comparing the two prints makes even technologically stunted morlocks like myself praise such advances as the digital revolution. Crisp and packed with color schemes that could have only been conceived in the sixties, Anchor Bay's release of this film is priceless. Furthermore, the DVD comes with a twenty six page booklet by the aforementioned

Goldschmidt that, like his book, gives some welcome background on the film.

In August of 2004, Warner Brothers and Thunder Road Pictures officially announced that a live action remake *of Mad Monster Party?* was in the works, to be produced by Basil Iwanyk and scripted by Joey Murphy and John Pardee, the latter two being producers and scriptwriters for the popular television show *Desperate Housewives* (2004–). It has been going on two years since this lamentable project was announced, and there's still no word if filming has actually commenced; if luck is with us, this unnecessary remake will have died in pre-production, saving us all from what will surely amount to cinematic sacrilege.

The monster's mate and the Mummy get down with the sounds of Little Tibula and the Phibbeans. Still from Mad Monster Party? (1967) Embassy Pictures Corp./Videocraft International

As for the original, really, what more can I say except… you're all invited!

MAD, MAD, MAD MONSTERS

(1972)

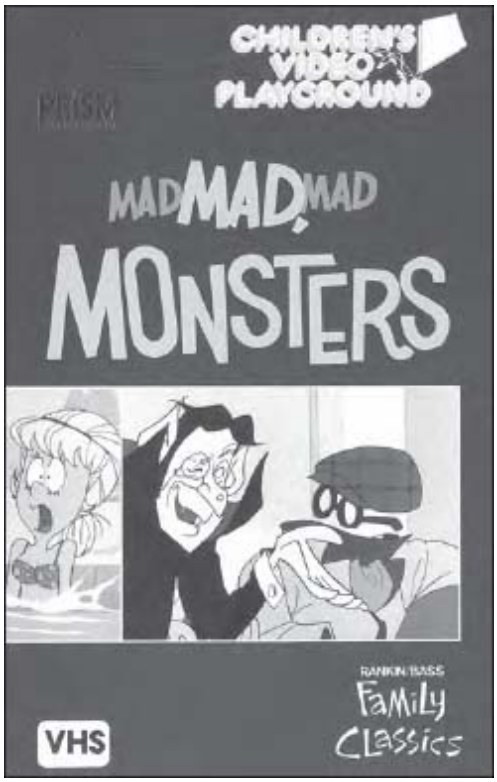
Rankin/Bass Productions [US] DIR: Jules Bass and Arthur Rankin Jr. PRO Jules Bass and Arthur Rankin Jr. SCR: William J Keenan

and Lou Silverstone MUS: Maury Laws STR: Bradley Bolke, Rhoda Mann, Bob McFadden and Allen Swift

AKA: *The Freaky Monster Show* Approximately 44m; Color; Made for TV

VHS: *Mad, Mad, Mad Monsters* [Prism Entertainment; 60(44)m; FS; NTSC] [Sony Video; 44m; FS; NTSC]

ADL: “Frankenstein’s Wedding—It’s a Real Scream!”



This page VHS box art for Mad, Mad, Mad Monsters (1985) Prism Entertainment Corporation #1213

Next page Four stills from Mad, Mad, Mad Monsters (1972) Rankin/Bass Productions

BARON HENRY von Frankenstein (not to be confused with Baron Boris von Frankenstein from *Mad Monster Party?)* and his insanely jealous hunchback assistant Igor make preparations for the Monster's betrothal to the Monsteress. Invitations are sent to all the featured creatures, with the festivities to be held at the Transylvania Astoria (and to take place on Friday the thirteenth, natch). In charge of the lodgings and banquet is Marvin, a postal employee who—after several unpleasant run ins with various monsters delivering invitations—has changed vocations and is filling in for the hotel's manager; and Norman, a smart assed, buck toothed bellboy who thinks their freaky guests are groovy. Things go as well as could be expected until Igor realizes that possession is nine tenths of the law and runs off, having abducted the ghoul of his dreams: the Monster's bride to be.

Although a follow up to *Mad Monster Party?, Mad, Mad, Mad Monsters* is obviously not a sequel, but a prequel at best. Besides the fact that all of the monsters were atomized in the previous film, most of them have also undergone changes, some more radically than others. Boris has changed his given name to Henry; Fang is now more appropriately referred to as The Monster; Phyllis Diller has been replaced by a much more comely mate; Yetch's position has been passed along to the dime store Igor; the King Kong stand-in It has been replaced by the curiously named Modzilla, an oversized abominable snowman who doesn't seem bothered by the fact that there's not a flake of snow in sight; Dracula and the Invisible Man now have families; and Felix Flankin, Francesca and the Hunchback of Notre Dame are nowhere to be found. The Mummy, the Creature and the Werewolf (now referred to as Ron Chanley) are essentially the same, as is Dr Jekyll/Mr Hyde, although he doesn't show his mug/s until the last few minutes. The banquet also offers musical entertainment by a band that resembles *Mad Monster Party?'s* Little Tibia and the Phibbeans, except that these hard rocking revenants prefer grim reaper like get-ups to performing au naturale.

Mad, Mad, Mad Monsters was originally aired on September 23, 1972 as *The ABC Saturday Superstar Movie*, one of four animated specials produced by Rankin and Bass for ABC television. With Rankin and Bass opting for traditional animation over claymation, *Mad, Mad, Mad Monsters* bears even more of a resemblance to a typical Saturday morning cartoon than a *Mad* magazine spoof gone awry. (Hearsay has it that underground cartoonist Robert Crumb was somehow involved with the production, but—like Ackerman's tenuous association with the previous film—these unlikely

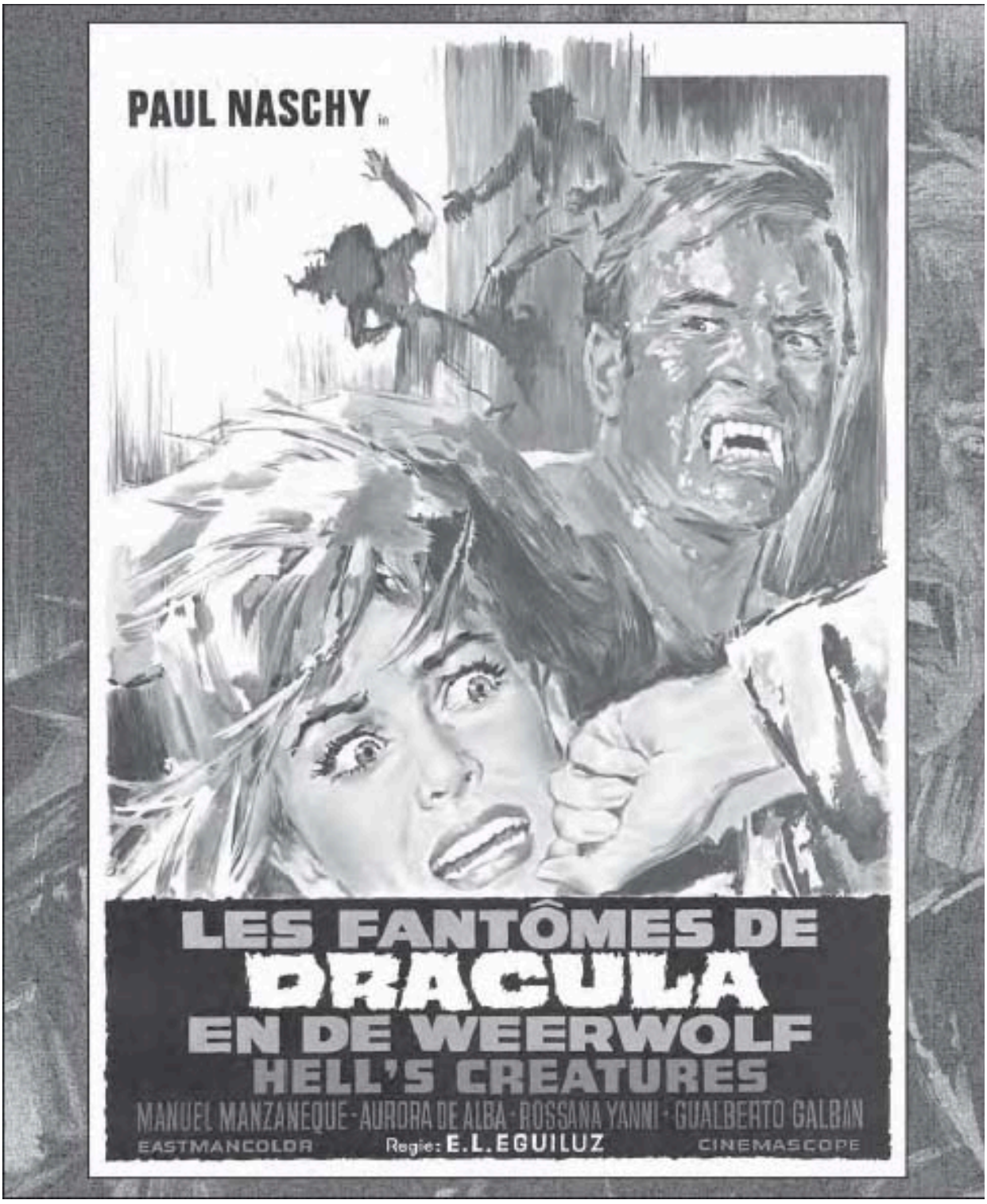
rumors have not been validated. Still, some sick pleasure may be derived from the notion that the creator of Fritz the Cat and Mr Natural had a hand in an all ages outing.) The overworked cast do their best to compensate, especially Videocraft regulars Mc-Fadden and Swift whose contributions are undeniably priceless, but it just isn't the same without the real Boris Karloff at the wheel.

Many of the same themes are reiterated from the previous film, although dumbed down for underage television viewers. Without a central figure like Felix Flankin to engage the viewer's attention, the formula becomes more obvious. Like its predecessor, there are some sexual innuendos, and the politics still haven't quite caught up with the sexual revolution, but these social faux pas aren't nearly as glaring. The script also belies its age with the abundance of terms like "groovy" and the references to people as "cats" and "chicks". Of course, some of us don't consider the latter a detriment.

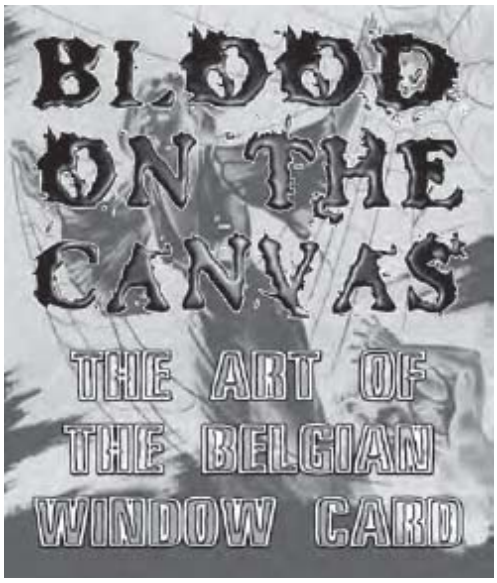
Although the jokes are a little more painful to endure for anyone who has successfully completed grammar school, there is some fun to be had in the silly if not inane proceedings. The best humor is reserved for Frankenstein's sexually frustrated assistant (who is lulled to sleep by his master's lofty speeches); the good doctor's pet vulture Rosebud (who makes a great straight man amidst the madhouse antics); and for the Monster, who is not just intimidated by the pre-arranged marriage, but scared shitless by the entire prospect.

Enjoyable, but hard to recommend to anyone not already stricken by its mad, mad, mad charms.

MAD, MAD
MONSTERS
The ABC Saturday Superstar Movie



Belgian window card for La Marca del Hombre-Lobo (1968) Maxper Producciones Cinematográficas



TUCKED BETWEEN France, Germany and the Netherlands and bordering the North Sea, Belgium is one of the smallest countries in Europe; covering nearly 12,000 square miles, it is barely larger than the state of Maryland in the United States. A thickly populated country, it is only natural that film has been an extremely popular pastime since it was introduced. Belgium has it own film industry, but being a small country of limited means has depended a great deal on imports to fill the slots on marquees.

As favored in most European countries during the sixties and seventies, many of these imports were exploitation films, as the distribution rights could be had reasonably cheap. The posters used to promote these films were stylistically not unlike those issued by other European countries. By the early seventies, nudity and gore was often quite prominent for more gratuitous cinematic offerings. Atypical to form, the most lurid pieces were sometimes the most beautifully rendered as well.

Eschewing photos for painted artwork (although a touched up still is incorporated into the artwork on occasion), most of these posters offer colorful acrylic and oil based renderings of scenes from the films, with the occasional tempera wash thrown in for variety. During the first half of the seventies, there was a trend among artists producing Belgian posters for genre films—primarily horror and sexploitation—to work in the medium of brush and black ink. Almost indistinguishable from what one could find in

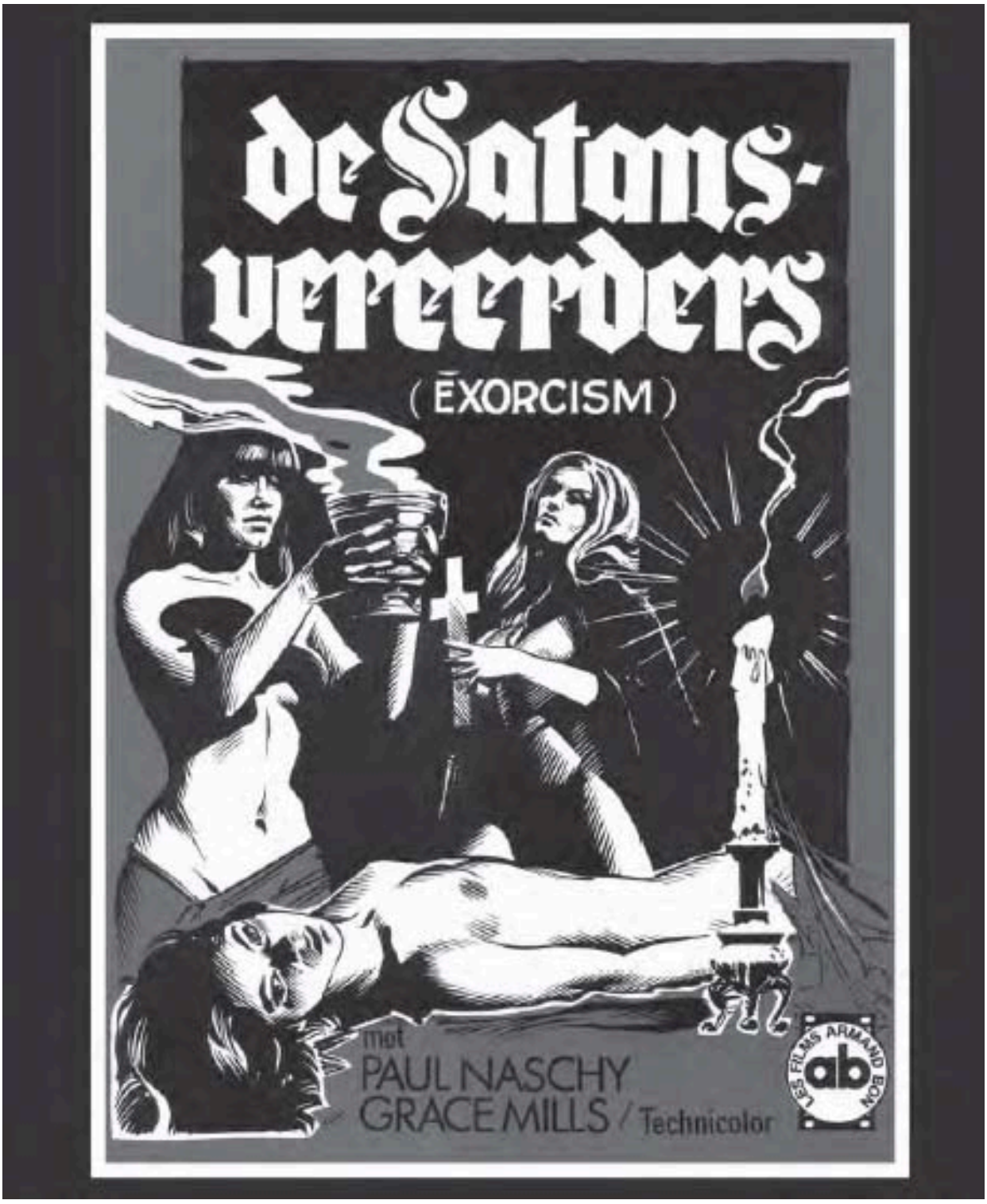
European comic books at the time, the posters offered some zest by highlighting the b&w illustrations with large red fills.

The window cards produced in Belgium were 14” wide by 2” tall, with a 2” to 3” empty band across the top so theatres could write in play dates and/or show times. They resembled American window cards, except that the American equivalent was 14” x 22” and printed on heavy cardstock. Cards from Belgium were generally printed on thinner one-sheet stock, matt for most titles released prior to 1970, and a glossy finish for most released thereafter.

What also sets Belgian cards apart is that the titles for the release are given in both French and Flemish, the two official languages of the country. Occasionally, the original title is listed as well, at least as far as English language titles are concerned. Obviously, this can make easy identification of imports that are otherwise obscured by lack of technical information, especially when the art bears no resemblance to the art used to promote the films in other countries.

In the gallery, I have tried to include a variety of styles that were applied to window cards for horror fare in the sixties and seventies. Unfortunately, much of their grandeur is lost in the b&w reproductions, but it is still easy to see the ways in which Belgian cards differed from their peers. Please note that, in order to reproduce as much of the artwork as possible, I have cropped the area that is usually left blank at the top of some cards.

Belgian window card for Un Bianco Vestito per Marialé (1972) Cosmopolis Films

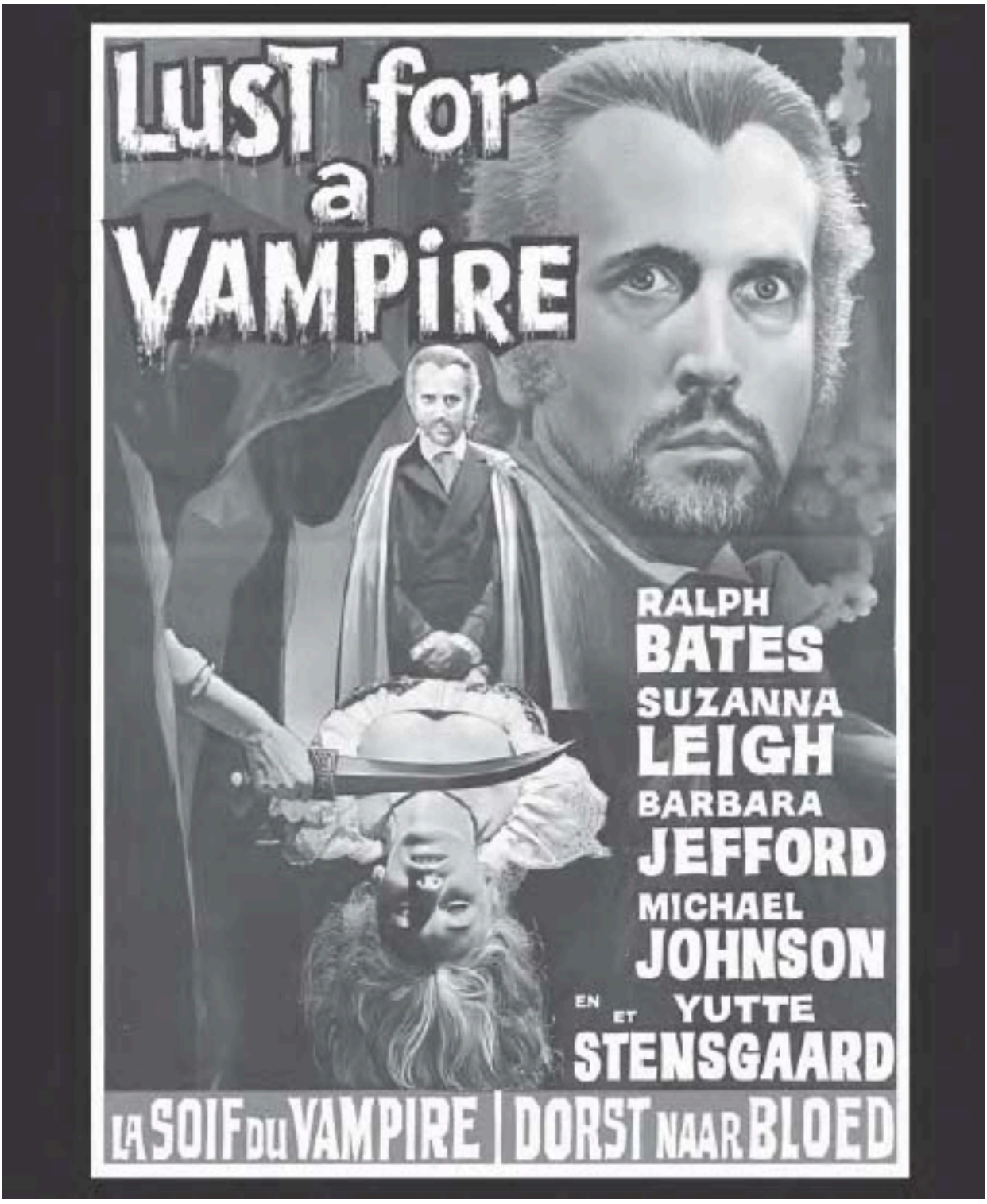


Belgian window card for Exorcismo (1975) Les Films Armand Bon

Belgian window card for El Jorobado de la Morgue (1973) Cosmopolis Films

Belgian window card for Byleth—Il Demone dell'Incesto (1972)
Cosmopolis Films

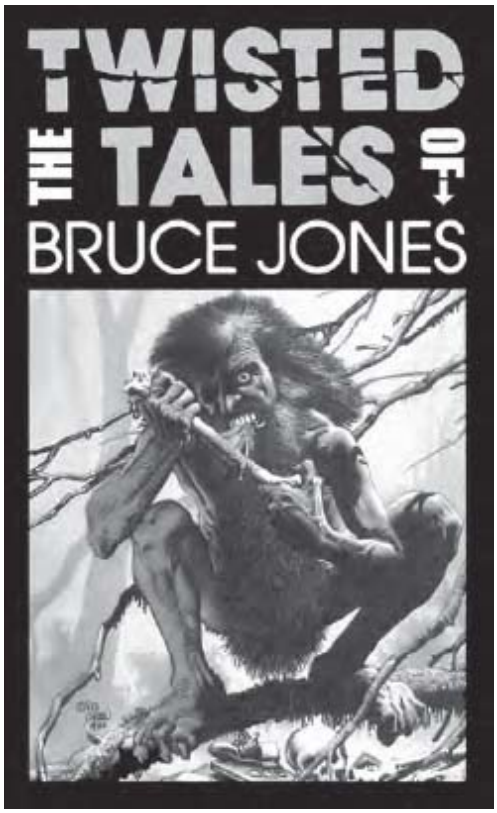
Belgian window card for La Figlia di Frankenstein (1971) Excelsior Films



Belgian window card for Lust for a Vampire (1971) Excelsior Films

SEEMINGLY YEARS LATER THE STORM ABATED. PETER, CRAWLING ON BLOODIED HAND HANDS AND KNEES, GAZED ABOUT HIMSELF DELIRIOUSLY...
WAS IT AN HALLUCINATION? DID I JUST IMAGINE"-- WHAT'S THIS? TRACKS! GOD, IT'S AHEAD OF ME!
WITH A STRENGTH BORN OF MADNESS, PETER PUSHED UP AND HOBBLED AFTER THE SICKLY TRAIL LEFT BY THE THING. MILES LATER, HE FOUND IT, TRUDGING RELENTLESSLY ON, FILLING THE ACRID AIR WITH ITS STENCH...
IT HASN'T REACHED THE OASIS YET!
THE LAST OF HIS WILL FADING, PETER SCRAMBLED CRAZILY ACROSS THE BURNING SAND, PASSED THE GRINNING HORROR, AND FELL HEADLONG INTO THE RELIEF-GIVING POOL...
SCOOPING FRANTICALLY WITH TORN FINGERS HE FILLED HIS ACHING STOMACH WITH THE COOLING LIQUID UNTIL HIS GUTS BURNED AND LUNGS BEGGED FOR AIR...THEN HE LAY GIGGLING QUIETLY...
HEH-HEH-HEH!
THERE WAS A NOISE BEHIND HIM, SHUFFLING OF DRY DECAYED FEET. PETER TURNED IN TIME TO SEE THE CORPSE OF HIS UNCLE TOPPLE INTO THE OASIS...
HA-HA! I WON, YOU BLOATED HORROR! I'VE HAD MY DRINK ALREADY...HEH-HEH... I BEAT YOU!

The dead get revenge on the living in this early effort written and illustrated by Bruce Jones. Page from “A Rottin’ Deal” from Nightmare 1974 Yearbook (1974) Skywald Publishing



Interview conducted via email September 2003

DESPITE A CAREER that spans several genres and mediums, Bruce Jones' name has become synonymous with horror. He penned an unaccountable number of shockers in the seventies that appeared in numerous comic magazines, in particular those in the Warren Publishing line that included *Creepy, Eerie* and *Vampirella.* By the close of the decade, Jones had become one of Jim Warren's most overworked writers, yet he continued to turn out high quality work that proved both the genre and the medium were capable of far better things than could be found in such hackneyed publications as those churned out by Eerie Publications. As time passed, Jones' work avoided cheap shocks and went deeper, offering a more psychological as well as poetic approach to the traditional horrors that littered comic books. A capable illustrator in his own right, Jones would later work alongside some of Warren's most popular illustrators, and with them

create classics of sequential storytelling that would prove to not only be the company's high points, but some of the best the medium has ever produced.

Born Bruce Elliot Jones in Kansas City, Missouri in 1946 (pre-Cambrian, if you ask him), the writer/artist claims to have had a typical suburban upbringing. His first published work was in *The Burroughs Bibliophiles*, and outside the comics industry in which he has received most attention, Mr Jones can also lay claim to being a screenwriter for film and television, a novelist, a fashion illustrator, and an off-Broadway actor, among other professions. He has won numerous awards, including two Warren Awards for Best Writer, a Barcelona Comics Award for Best Writer, a Wizard Magazine Award for Best Breakthrough Talent, and an Illustration Annual Award for Best Art Direction. Even more prestigious, he has received much coveted nominations from both the Edgar Mystery Writer Awards and the Eisner Comic Book Awards. And if this wasn't enough, he caps off his impressive résumé with having received his Cub Scout Merit Badge prior to launching an illustrious career in art and literature.

TRASHFIEND: ***What was the first horror film you saw as a child? What kind of impression did it leave on you?***

BRUCE JONES: The first horror film I can remember was something called *The Creeper* (1948) that I watched on TV all alone one night. I was very young and impressionable. I don't recall the stars or much about the story—something about weird experiments with cats that changed a man's hand into a cat claw. There was hideous cat howling throughout the picture…cat claws creeping over a young woman's windowsill at night and reaching from under her bed. It gave me nightmares for years to come. I was desperately afraid of the dark after that and throughout my early childhood. I had just begun to grow out of it when I tripped across Val Lewton's Cat People (1942) and it started all over again. At the same time I was curiously drawn to those films. I got a visceral thrill from being frightened—a kind of sadomasochistic search for forbidden fruit. I have no particular aversion to cats now, though I'm still not wild about their midnight yowling. I guess I was warped early on. Maybe it also had something to do with being born on Halloween night and all those spooky birthday parties.

WHAT FOLLOWED WAS LIKE A DREAM. I REMEMBER RUNNING ALMOST MECHANICALLY THROUGH ALLEYS AND BACK LOTS HEAVY WITH EVENING SHADOWS... MY MIND CROWDED WITH THE SINGLE DRIVING DESIRE TO DESTROY JENIFER.
I REMEMBER THROWING THE BRICK, GRABBING THE HEAVY OBJECT WITHIN THE STORE WINDOW...
I REMEMBER TURNING THERE ON THE STREET, SURPRISED TO SEE JENIFER RIGHT BEHIND ME... STARING AT ME... STARING...
STARING...

Writer Bruce Jones and artist Berni Wrightson tackle a sensitive love story in Jennifer. Creepy #63 (July 1974) Warren Publishing

You once referred to The Texas Chain Saw Massacre (1974) as "the greatest horror film [you] ever saw." (Dark Comedy: A Decade with Berni Wrightson, 1977 Comic Art Convention: Special Tenth Anniversary Edition). Do you still hold the same reverence for this film almost thirty years later?

That sounds like my typically audacious self. I can't imagine why I singled out any particular film as the best in the genre. Maybe what I meant was that Hooper did a great job of capturing the same kind of cinéma vérité style with *Chain Saw* that Romero did with *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), except in color. It was a case of inexpensive equipment and crew aiding production as opposed to working against it. *The Blair Witch Project* (1999) people did the same thing years later with their piece. In that regard I think *Chain Saw* still works quite well. Some of it, of course, is just dumb luck. My understanding is that the filming conditions on *Chain Saw* were really loathsome and that they were glad to get anything at all on raw stock by the end of the day—or the end of the morning as was often the case. You rarely

ever know why a film works while you're shooting it, and you certainly never know what makes a classic. As Brando said, it's always a crapshoot.

IF I COULD BELIEVE SHE HEARS ME,
KNOWS MY ANGUISH, FEELS MY PAIN,
I'D LEAVE THIS MORTAL HUSK FOREVER,
AND LET HER WANDERING SPIRIT CLAIM.
TO SEE HER STAND ONCEMORE BEFORE ME,
TO KNOW HER TOUCH WHILE I YET LIVE,
TO HEAR HER TENDER VOICE CONSOLE ME,
"BELOVED HUSBAND... I FORGIVE."

Bruce Jones' work takes a turn for the Poe-etic in "Clarice," illustrated by Berni Wrightson. Creepy #77 (February 1976) Warren Publishing

What do you consider the pinnacles in horror, whether it be film or literature, and why? What do you consider the low points of the genre?

It's a hard question because the answer is so relative. Poe obviously did great work, but then on the other hand so did Val Lewton. These things really boil down to personal taste, which is rarely based on anything easily described or necessarily analytical. What Robert Ebert used to call guilty pleasures. Films and books that make a major impression on us—like *The Creeper*— don't always have a great deal of aesthetic merit. They just ring our bell for some reason, probably by touching some nerve in our personal psyche, usually during our youth. You guys are into the seventies stuff because it made an impact on your formative years. Most of my formative film years were spent watching b&w movies because that's all TV was, and a large number of theatrical films were still being made in b&w back then.

To me it always had a dreamlike, graphic quality color never seemed to attain. But I can't get my own kid to even watch b&w films because they weren't in flux with his system. So it's all relative. The trouble with color genre films for me is that you're always looking at the color, which can become a distraction in itself. B&w is subtler. The blacks are true blacks and a counterpoint to the whites. You have only two elements making up the matrix that forms the images.

Veal, anyone? A panel from the splash page of Bruce Jones' "As Ye Sow," illustrated by Luis Bermejo. Creepy #79 (May 1976) Warren Publishing

What comic books influenced you most as a child?

I read *Tarzan* and *Mighty Mouse* because that's what was around. I didn't come into regular comic reading until after the Code, so I had to pick up the EC and other horror and sci fi titles at used bookstores during college. But back then there were so many more companies publishing comics, such a wide variety of attitude to choose from. Very eclectic, which is usually a good thing, though we had our share of money grubbing sharks shoveling out their tripe. When I was a kid, all kids read comic books. There was no such thing as a nerd, or an elitist if you will. Comics were a big part of popular culture and, like the movies, another place to find color narrative. But it certainly wasn't hip. I never let my girlfriends know I read them. That would have been death. The movies and graphic novels helped change all that.

Your work as an illustrator was very stylized and very distinct, and fondly remembered by horror fans of my generation who grew up on Warren and Skywald. When did you decide that you wanted to become a comic artist or writer? Who were your biggest influences? Why was it you abandoned illustration in the mid seventies and solely pursued a writing career?

I decided to study art in college and pursue it as a career in New York because it seemed the path of least resistance. I was the kid who could always outdraw the other kids in class, you know. My influences were Hal Foster, Frazetta, Williamson, and all those guys with an illustrative style. I was as much in pursuit of commercial art gigs as I was with comics, but the comic work just seemed to become more regular. I was never a fast artist, though, and you must retain a certain speed in this business to stay above water. So I eventually segued into writing pretty much full time. With drawing you're chained to a board all day and night… writing lets you walk around the mall while you're thinking about the plot. I guess I'm gregarious by nature. I like to watch people.

I didn't actually withdraw totally from drawing; I just took on less work in that field so I could spend more time at it, using writing to pay the bills. Looking back, I wish I'd spent even more time at it. I think I had the potential to do some first class work but much of it looks rushed now. I was always punished by the deadlines. This is, after all, a business before an art.

Would you ever consider getting back into illustrating, or do you feel this part of your comics work is behind you?

I never was one to plan very far ahead with my life. The best drawing like the best writing is done because you want to, not because you're being paid for it. But once marriage and children become a part of your life you have to take a more philosophical approach to what you're doing. I've been thinking about doing some painting recently but not in the sequential storytelling mold. Just stuff I'd like to do for my own pleasure, not necessarily genre related. But I may change my mind. I often do.

Although you toyed around with fantasy and sci fi, most of your work from the seventies was horror. Was this a conscious decision, a preference, or was it more a matter of supply and demand, since much of your work was with publishers like Warren who were devoted to the genre?

A little of each, but mostly probably supply and demand. You go where the work is. I always considered myself a writer first, then worried about the

genre later. I was not as successful as a superhero writer or mystery novelist as I was as a horror writer so I stuck with what I was making a living at. I always thought my best work was in my novels. But in the end, you're only as good as whatever editor is buying your stuff. I just seemed to have better luck with comic book editors than novel editors or TV and movie producers, though I had my share of incredibly inept comic editors. I always wonder how much really great stuff is out there hidden in the drawers of writers and artists all over the country simply because some editor didn't have the foresight to recognize what he had in front of him. It's a tough business, and sometimes a disheartening one. But every so often very, very rewarding as well.

A MIND-PIERCING SCREECH BROKE HIS REVERIE. HE JOLTED UP, EYES FIXING CONFUSEDLY ON HIS WIFE'S CORPSE...AS IF SHE MIGHT SUPPLY ANSWERS. HIS STOMACH TWISTED. HER FACE WAS HALF GONE. THE SKY WAS FILLED WITH GULLS...

Richard Corben illustrates Bruce Jones' "In Deep." Creepy #83 (October 1976) Warren Publishing

How did you meet Jeff Jones, with whom you share many similarities artistically? It appears that, as friends and peers, you may have had some

influence over each other's approach to illustration.

Jeff was one of the first people I met when I first came to New York. I think I was taking samples of my stuff to the Warren offices back then and they weren't interested but suggested I go see Jeff who was new in town and whose style was reminiscent of mine. I went to see him in his tiny, roach ridden apartment and we hit it off right away. Jeff was the guy I could sit around with for hours and jaw about fine art without once touching on comics. He introduced me to Brangwyn and Cole and other great illustrators and we haunted old bookstores together with Roy Krenkel. And, yes, we shared a fan boy worship of Frazetta and Williamson and used to go up and visit them regularly before they became legends. Everyone was so open, so accessible back then. Not a narcissistic head in the group. It was great. Comics were looked upon with general disdain by the public at large, but we didn't give a damn. We were out to change the world. The brevity of youth, you know?

Some of your best work was with Berni Wright-son, to whom your writing seems very suited, in particular such unforgettable pieces as 'Clarice', 'Jennifer' and 'The Laughing Man.' How did the collaboration process work? Did you write these stories knowing he was to illustrate them?

Berni and Jeff and Mike Kaluta and I all came to New York at almost exactly the same time— it was sheer coincidence, serendipity really— four guys from completely disparate parts of the country coming together at that precise time with those same general interests. We hung out together and supported each other morally through the tough times. I began working with Berni because Jeff's then wife Louise Jones was editing the Warren line and Berni and I were close friends who admired each other's work. I always knew I was writing a particular story for him. Corben was the same way. We just clicked. It was a fortuitous time.

Some of your earliest professional work was on the sadly short-lived horror comic anthology Web of Horror, which I assume came about due to your association with Jeff Jones and Berni Wrightson. Your work also appeared in the extremely rare fan produced magazine Abyss #1 (1970). What can you tell us about these publications?

My first published work was actually doing one page [illustrations] for *Amazing* and *Fantastic* sci fi magazines. I think the first comic story of mine

was for *Web of Horror,* but I may be wrong. Our little gang of iconoclasts was tired of the routine and lack of imagination up at DC and Marvel during those days and *Abyss* was a result of that. We just wanted to do what we wanted to do the way we wanted to do it. It didn't sell worth a plug nickel, though I think we broke even after printing costs. The guys at Image did it twenty years later and became rich.

Why was Web of Horror cancelled after the third issue? Your contribution for the aborted fourth issue, 'Outside-In,' was later published in the second issue of This is Reality (1971). Was this your only contribution to Web of Horror #4, and if not did the others ever see print?

Web of Horror was published by a guy named Robert Sproul who also published *Cracked* magazine. He was trying to cash in on the Warren horror books. Sci fi writer Terry Bisson was the editor. When Bisson quit after issue three, Berni and I took over as co-editors. We worked very hard putting together some great already completed jobs, throwing out the crappy stuff and putting in some new work of our own. But Sproul had lost interest in the book; apparently it wasn't making enough money to suit him. He strung us along forever with vague promises but nothing ever came to fruition. I went back into the stock room and tried to return all the finished originals to their respective artists, those commissioned by Sproul but never paid. Then Berni and I tossed in the towel. It was a shame. There was some classy stuff in there. Berni did a fourth issue painted cover of a three-armed guy in a swamp holding a knife behind his back that was a knockout. The story inside was called 'One Too Many' and published elsewhere later on, I believe.

In a dedication to Wrightson you wrote in 1977, you mention a collaboration with him called 'The Jade Hand' commissioned by National Periodical Publications aka DC Comics, but never published by them. What can you tell us about this particular piece? Did it ever see print elsewhere?

I don't remember too much about it. I was trying to break into DC at the time without much luck. I think Berni had started the job and grown bored with it and I offered to finish it or something. I don't believe it was ever published. When I think about it now, the idea of marrying my style with Berni's sounds pretty bizarre. Possibly whoever the editor was thought so too.

You had a handful of stories published by Sky-wold during their short but impressive stint as a purveyer of horror comic magazines. What was it like working for Al Hewetson and his Horror-Mood Team?

Skywald asked me to come on as regular writer and editor of their books after seeing some of my stuff. I thought it was a company desperately in need of editorial guidance. But we couldn't work out a price. Hewetson came along later and they started doing stories with the old Heap character along with a lot of Hewetson's writing. They gave him the job of editor. I think they were having a hard time staying afloat by then and they cut the page rates and ran a lot of so-so material. I pretty much lost interest with what Hewetson was doing with that whole Horror-Mood routine—a phrase that still doesn't make a lot of sense to me. I think Warren was beating the socks off them at a time even Warren was fighting to stay alive. The b&w magazines never made the kind of money the color comics brought in. After the horror boom of the fifties, and its demise with the Comics Code, superheroes pretty much ruled. Which remains the case today. No one seems to care for the episodic format anymore.

It appears your output during the seventies was predominantly published by Jim Warren, particularly during the latter half of the decade. What was it like working for them? Did you have any control over who illustrated your stories?

I didn't need control because Louise Jones, who edited the books, had great taste and a genuine interest in getting the best art possible, even when the meager budget didn't always allow that. Warren was one of the first publishers to take advantage of the foreign art market, which was cheap to get but still offered some class material. I liked a few of the European artists, but my favorites were still the Wrightsons and Corbens and Heaths. Louise was very gracious about giving my scripts to top notch artists both here and abroad. She was a dream to work for—a very intuitive, very bright woman. She lent a lot to the business and deserves more credit.

Why was your work for Warren fairly sporadic until 1976 when you became a regular contributor, with some issues of Creepy and Eerie featuring as many as three contributions by you?

I had been trying to break into Warren for quite some time as a writer without success. I got a few jobs illustrating other writer's stories but the

then editor, Bill Dubay, wasn’t keen on my prose. Then I wrote ‘Jennifer’ and he went ape. He gave it to Berni to illustrate. Shortly after that I moved from New York back to the midwest. About this same time Dubay quit Warren. I then got a call from Louise ‘Weezie’ Jones telling me she was the new editor and would I like to send in some more scripts? I said sure, and she bought nearly everything I sent from the very first. It was one of the happiest relationships I ever had with an editor. It didn’t hurt, of course, that we were already friends through her husband Jeff. Like any other business, comics are about connections.

SHE RAISED HER ARMS BUT THE WRENCH KNOCKED HER HANDS AWAY, WRISTS SNAPPING LIKE DRY TWIGS. YOU HIT HER IN THE BACK AND SHE GRUNTED LIKE A PIG, HER FACE SMASHING INTO THE CARPET WITH A STRANGLED CRY ...
SHE ROSE UP ON HER KNEES, TRYING TO SUPPORT HERSELF ON HER MANGLED HANDS, HOLDING THEM OUT TO YOU IN A SIGN OF PITY, BEGGING YOU THROUGH EYES GLAZED WITH FEAR AND PAIN ...
YOU MADE A RED SMEAR OF HER MOUTH WITH THE CLUB, CRUSHING BONE AND GARTILEDGE. SHE MOANED BENEATH YOUR HEAVING FIGURE, THEN PUSHED UP AGAIN, SPITTING BLOOD AND BILE, TRYING TO CRAWL AWAY, LEAVING A CRIMSON TRAIL ON THE RUMPLED CARPET ...
YOU FOLLOWED, BRINGING THE WRENCH DOWN AGAIN AND AGAIN ON HER SHOULDERS, HER NECK, UNTIL YOUR ARM ACHED AND THE ROOM WAS A RED BLUR AND SHE WASN'T MOANING ANYMORE. THE SCREAM OF THE FIRE ENGINES BRINGS YOU OUT OF YOUR REVERIE THAT'S IT! YOUR LAST CUE. THE PLAY IS ALMOST ENDED NOW ...

A particularly brutal but strikingly choreographed page of sequential art by writer/artist Bruce Jones from the story “Hung Up,” published in Nightmare #8 (1972) Skywald Publishing

Aside from your collaborations with Wrightson, your most memorable work was with underground artist Richard Corben, another illustrator with whom your stories have an affinity despite his and Wrightson's very different styles. Can we assume that this was also a favorable partnership, since you continued to work with him into the nineties?

Oh, yeah. Rich and I got along great, and he lived just a few miles from me in Kansas City so it was like having Berni or Jeff around in the midwest. We had similar interests at the time and even fooled around with making films together. Again it was just total serendipity, being in the right place at the right time with the right publisher and editor. You can't make those kinds of things happen, they have a will of their own. At the time we took it for granted, it was just work. We had no idea in the least that anyone would actually remember that stuff. We were young and feeling our oats and just hanging out. It was fun and we were making a living.

One of your most memorable collaborations with Corben was the oft reprinted story 'In Deep,' which was both a poignant and truly shocking story of the highest order. What prompted you to write a sequel a couple of years later?

I really don't recall. I remember that 'In Deep' was well received and won me an award I think. Maybe Corb said he was interested in doing a sequel or maybe it was Weezie's idea, I don't know. I remember I was disappointed when Corb didn't do it and the artwork was less than stellar. But then, so was the story, probably. Good rule of thumb: don't attempt to top yourself.

Aside from yourself, what artist do you feel best complemented your horror prose during the seventies? If not Wrightson and/or Corben, are there any other artists during this time that you feel truly did your work justice?

It would have to be Russ Heath. He was a childhood hero of mine so it was an honor working with him. And he did absolutely great things with my scripts. I wish we could have done even more together. Russ is such a giant talent, truly one of the greats. The only other time I worked with such an amazing pool of artistic talent was on *Twisted Tales* and *Alien Worlds* and that probably wouldn't have happened without the Warren books. My one

regret is not being able to get Russ for those books. He was busy with a daily strip at the time.

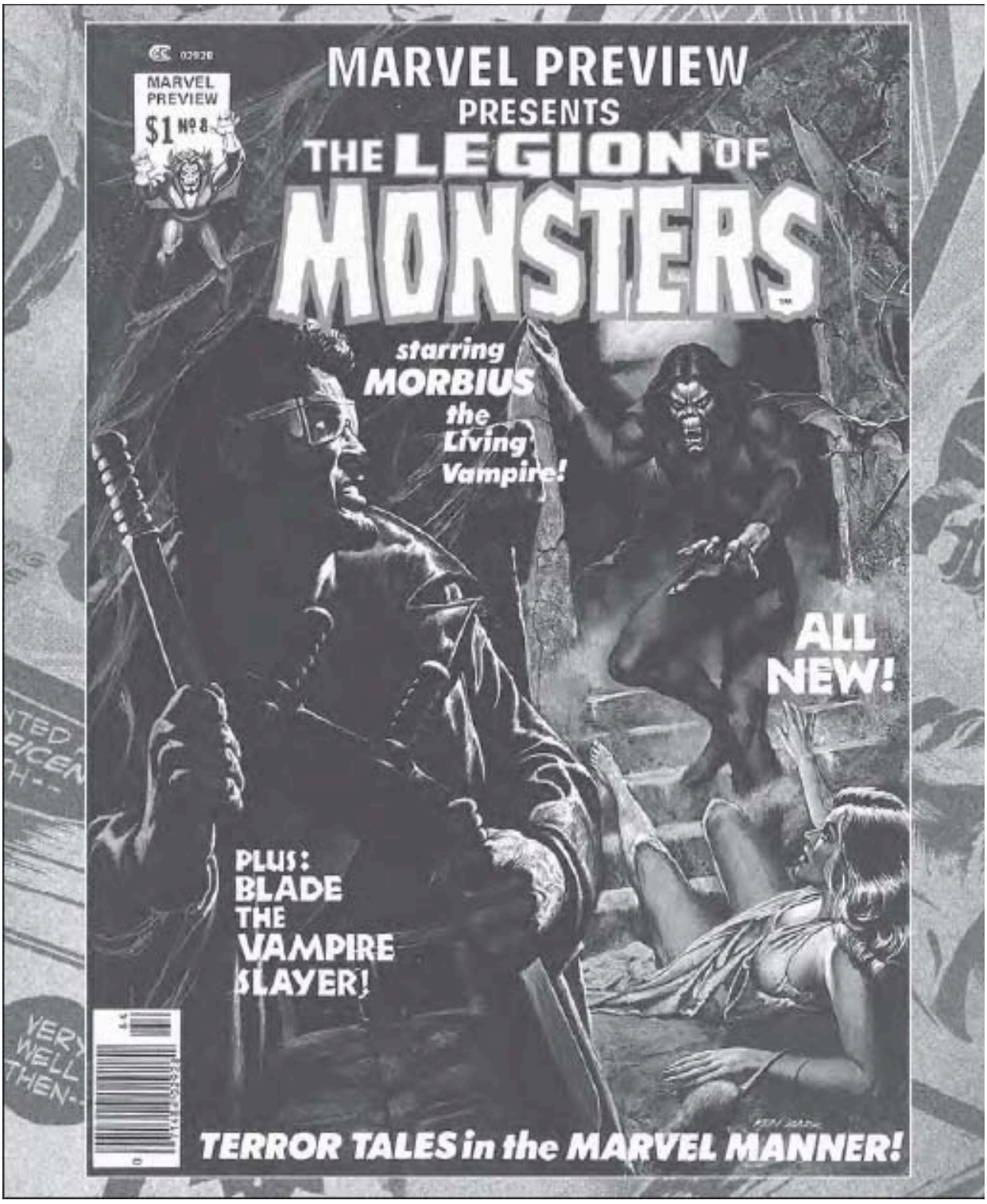
What horror-oriented story from the seventies are you most proud of, and why?

I really don't have a particular favorite. Wright-son, Corben, Heath—all those guys did great jobs in completely different ways. It's impossible for me to pick a favorite. Some of my best stories went to artists of lesser talent, I remember, so I tend to not recall the stories themselves. But that's the business. You can't always hit the nail on the head. I was very lucky to hit it more than most.

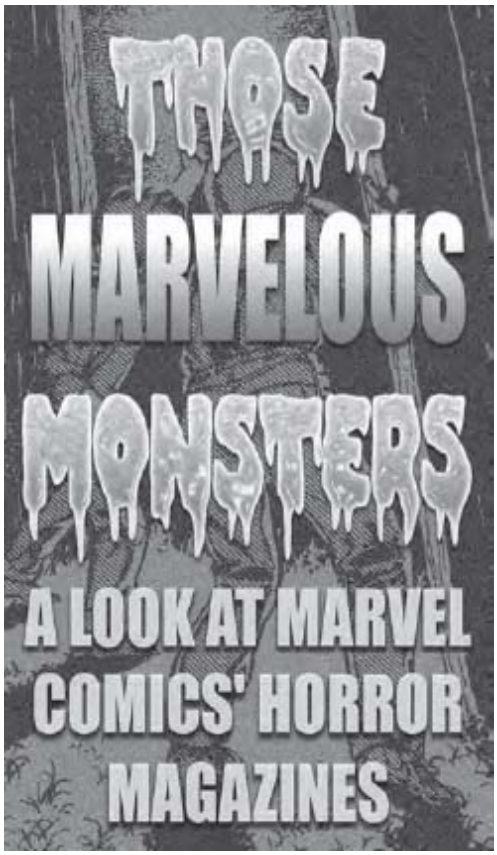
You have been having much success with* The *Incredible Hulk as of late. Having spent much of your career as an exemplary horror writer, were you eager to try your hand at other genres?

Yeah. I would liked to have moved around in the business a lot more than I did, but you tend to get stereotyped early on and it's hard to shake a label. *Hulk* has been a lot of fun though and I'm happy about its success. It's the kind of book I never dreamed I'd be associated with but I couldn't be more pleased that it's worked out well. The fan response has been nice after all these years, especially coming from a non horror-oriented audience. And it's fun being back in comics again after a long absence. I always considered it as legitimate an art form as any other. And just as hard to do well. Maybe harder.

❑ **Bruce Jones: selected horror magazine checklist, see page 282**



Painter Kenneth Barr pits Morbius the Human Vampire against Blade the Vampire Slayer. Cover art for Marvel Preview V1#8 (Fall 1976) Marvel Comics Group



Lights pinpointing, emphasizing, accentuating his horrible ugliness…freezing on garish scars and stitches of catgut, riveting moldering flesh grey with a queasy pallor no amount of stolen blood could flush with life…stark light hitting his hideously corrupt face with shadows from a shelved brow, drowning creases and deep gouges chiseled from deteriorated flesh ravaged by grave and vermin alike.

Excerpt from 'Frankenstein 1974: The Conscience of the Creature' by Doug Moench, Monsters *Unleashed! v1#9* (Dec 1974) Marvel Comics Group

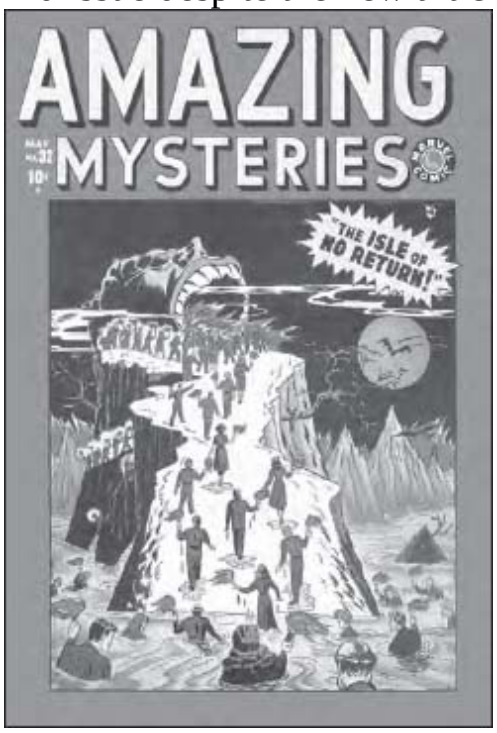
WARREN. SKYWALD. EERIE PUBLICATIONS. The names of such publishers evoke a bygone era, a time when horror comics not only

flourished as four-color books but also as more mature b&w magazines. From the rise of the format in the sixties, to the glutting of the market in the seventies, to its demise in the early eighties, the format has not been forgotten. Whereas these other companies were primarily magazine publishers, those responsible for ‘The World’s Greatest Comics’ decided to try their hand at the format, creating some endearing contributions to the genre.

Since its groundbreaking namesake was published in 1939 by Timely, Marvel Comics is an entity that has far exceeded the boundaries of the comic book industry. Starting with *Amazing Mysteries* v1#32 (May 1949), Marvel began publishing a number of horror anthologies that survived the Kefauver Senate Hearings and the advent of the puritanical Comics Code Authority. These titles went into hibernation during the sixties when Marvel’s distinct approach to superheroes not only spelled a revival for that genre, but also soon dominated the comics market. The demand for more grisly comics fare, though, was far from dead, and became the bread and butter for several smaller publishers who exploited this niche. Sensing there was still a profit to be made from horror fans, but apparently unaware that the market couldn’t withstand much more, Marvel took another stab at the genre during the monster craze of the seventies.

Marvel’s first foray into publishing a magazine devoted to monsters, in 1964, was a slim fumetti style book called *Monsters to Laugh With* featuring “Filmdom’s Funniest Fiends”, which—after three issues—changed its name to *Monsters Unlimited.* This short-lived magazine included photos from various creature features accompanied by humorous captions penned by Mr Excelsior himself, Stan Lee. Although they were rarely much better than Forrest J Ackerman’s puns in *Famous Monsters of Filmland,* these magazines still offered desperate readers a great opportunity to pour over rare film stills from the golden age of movie monsters. Marvel’s publication was an aberration, and was more an attempt to cash in on the current trend of funny fiendom represented by the success of television shows like *The Munsters* (1964–66). (Marvel tried to resuscitate this formula with *Monster*

Madness in 1972, but it died with the third issue despite the new articles that accompanied the hand me down gags.)

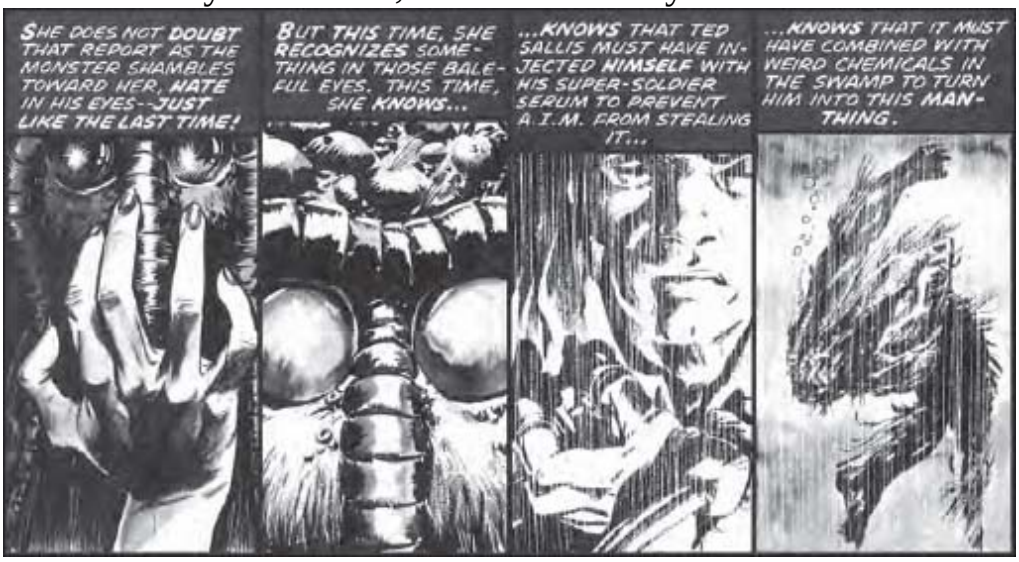


Marvel's first attempt to milk the horror genre. Amazing Mysteries V1#32 (May 1949) Timely Comics

It wasn't until the early seventies that Marvel decided to make the jump into helming an entire line of b&w magazines, having taken an occasional stab at the format in the past. Their first successful magazine publication—in regard to both returns and fan response—was *Savage Tales* (1971–75). In addition to boasting an early appearance of Robert E Howard's Conan the Barbarian (established as a four-color comic the previous year), the first issue also included the first appearance of the Man-Thing, a character that would become something of a fixture in Marvel's forthcoming horror books. (Over thirty years after making his debut, Artisan Entertainment released *Man-Thing* [2005], an insulting made for cable television misinterpretation of the beloved shambling mound for indiscriminate comic fans and uneducated filmgoers.) In light of the receptive market, the leading comic company decided to expand its catalogue of oversized, Comics Code Authority exempt titles. Many of these books were horror related and produced by Sal Brodsky (1923–84), who in 1970 had left Marvel to start Skywald Publishing with Herschell Waldman. (Skywald's longest running

books, *Nightmare* (1970–75) and *Psycho* (1971–75), were created to cash in on the demand created by Jim Warren's successful line of b&w horror magazines.) Having received an offer he couldn't refuse, Brodsky handed over Skywald's reins to Alan Hewetson in 1972 and returned to Marvel in order to oversee their new line of creature comics. It is not surprising that these early Marvel horror magazines bear some similarities to the Skywald efforts Brodsky had left behind.

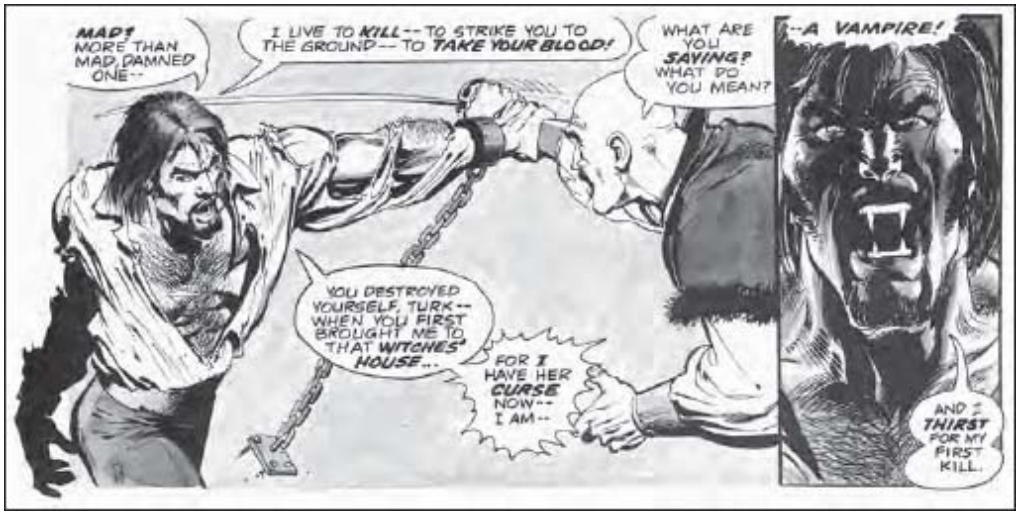
Initially, Marvel's horror comic magazines adhered to a formula: one third new material, usually featuring characters intended for serialized adventures; one third articles devoted to the magazine's titular subject, usually as perceived in film and folklore; and one third golden age comic reprints from Marvel's archives by such prolific artists and writers as Tony di Preta, Bernard Krigstein and Paul Reinman. (Most of the recycled material was culled from such juvenile delinquent inspiring titles as *Journey into Unknown Worlds* [1950–57], *Marvel Tales* [1949–57], *Menace* [1953–54], and *Uncanny Tales* [1952–57], and—due to their pre-Code nature—could not be published in the standard four-color comic format without risking the CCA's wrath. As time went on, the reprints were eventually dropped.) Bridging the pieces would be full page monster movie stills bearing introductory captions, which were useless except as marred photos. (EC, with the Crypt-Keeper and her siblings, and later Warren with Cousin Eerie and Uncle Creepy, were much more successful in such attempts, as their host-like mascots were far more personable and usually integrated into the story itself, if only as a wraparound.)


SHE DOES NOT DOUBT THAT REPORT AS THE MONSTER SHAMBLES TOWARD HER, HATE IN HIS EYES--JUST LIKE THE LAST TIME!
BUT THIS TIME, SHE RECOGNIZES SOMETHING IN THOSE BALEFUL EYES. THIS TIME, SHE KNOWS...
...KNOWS THAT TED SALLIS MUST HAVE INJECTED HIMSELF WITH HIS SUPER-SOLDIER SERUM TO PREVENT A.I.M. FROM STEALING IT...
...KNOWS THAT IT MUST HAVE COMBINED WITH WEIRD CHEMICALS IN THE SWAMP TO TURN HIM INTO THIS MAN-THING.

Man Thing's origin is revisited by Tony Isabella and Vicente Alcazar in "All the Faces of Fear!" from Monsters Unleashed! V1#5 (April 1974) Marvel Comics Group

The first of these horror comic magazines to see the light of dusk was *Dracula Lives!* (1973–75). Boasting an early painted cover by Boris Vallejo, this title included several stories featuring the antihero from Marvel's color comic series *The Tomb of Dracula* (which was begat a year earlier and ran until 1979). Most of the reprints in *Dracula Lives!* dealt with the undead, and the articles were all devoted to Dracula's kith and kin, both onscreen and off.

Although Marvel's interpretation was far more characteristic than previous takes on Bram Stoker's creation, the stories in Marvel's magazine suffered from serious inconsistencies, due to the art and writing chores constantly changing hands. (Whatever faults it may have had, the highly regarded seventy issue comic book run of *Tomb of Dracula* did not suffer such a fate, as it was illustrated from start to finish by Eugene Colan, with writer Marvin Wolfman on board for almost as long.) Furthermore, the vampire lord as perceived in the magazine was not as emphatic as he should have been, since he carried much of the book by himself. Whereas, say, Christopher Lee's Dracula had an aristocratic air about him, Marvel's Count —with his lofty deliveries and pretentious assumptions—often came off as pompous. Whilst Bela Lugosi's Dracula had a certain class, Marvel's Count was simply crass.


MAD? MORE THAN MAD, DAMNED ONE--
I LIVE TO KILL -- TO STRIKE YOU TO THE GROUND -- TO TAKE YOUR BLOOD!
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING? WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
--A VAMPIRE!
YOU DESTROYED YOURSELF, TURK -- WHEN YOU FIRST BROUGHT ME TO THAT WITCHES' HOUSE...
FOR I HAVE HER CURSE NOW -- I AM --
AND I THIRST FOR MY FIRST KILL.

Marv Wolfman and Neal Adams “reinvent” Stoker’s bloodsucker in “That Dracula May Live Again.” Dracula Lives! V1#2 (1973) Marvel Comics Group

There were exceptions, as in the case of Count Dracula’s origin story that appeared in *Dracula Lives!’* second issue. Written by Marv Wolfman and illustrated by Neal Adams, ‘That Dracula May Live Again!’ captured Stoker’s vision in a way that pedestrian efforts couldn’t, bestowing a certain dignity upon the character that was often sorely lacking. Starting in the fifth issue, the editors decided to actually take a crack at the source material of the magazine’s namesake, introducing a serialized adaptation of Stoker’s novel. Adequately produced by Roy Thomas and Dick Giordano, it was a nice primer for younger fans unfamiliar with the book; for those of us who already had intimate knowledge of Stoker’s literary classic, it proved to be little more than filler.

Towards the end of *Dracula Lives!* another feature character was introduced, Dracula’s own daughter Lilith. Unlike her old world father, Lilith was presented in a more mod fashion, and even sported a costume not unlike a typical Marvel superheroine. A far more sympathetic monster than her father, Lilith took no pleasure in drinking the blood of innocents, preferring to prowl the seedier districts of the city and milk the life from such undesirables as rapists and drug dealers. When not laying waste to the metaphorical scum of the earth, her spirit resided in the body of the unwary Irish immigrant Angel O’Hara. Although readers could more readily identify with her on several levels, the character rarely amounted to more than a second rate Vampirella. Still, many of the stories were engaging, and benefited from the continuity.

Within a few months of the premiere of *Dracula Lives!* Marvel had a modest stable of b&w horror magazines that also included *Monsters Unleashed!*, *Tales of the Zombie* and *Vampire Tales*, each catering to a different breed of beast (although *Monsters Unleashed!* was much less discriminating than its elitist siblings).

Monsters Unleashed! (1973–75) gave coverage to several already established characters, from Marvel’s takes on classic movie monsters (Frankenstein’s Monster and Werewolf by Night among them) to more ‘original’ creations (the Man-Thing and the Son of Satan). Most of these

stories proved to be the magazine's key selling points, displaying Marvel's endearing approach to comic storytelling that echoed their outright superhero efforts. Otherwise, this title tackled a variety of more generic beasties and bogies, and often in a manner less than inspired.

The undisputed star of *Monsters Unleashed!* was Marvel's updating of Mary Shelley's progeny. Borrowed from the monthly color comic *The Monster of Frankenstein* (1973–75), Victor's patchwork creation for the most part carried over better than Dracula. The continuity was stronger, and the drama was much more engaging, even if some of the concepts were hackneyed. With the sixth issue, Val Mayerick took over the art chores for the Frankenstein saga, which elevated the stories even further. (One of the stories, 'The 11:10 to Murder,' in issue ten, was particularly exceptional in its integration of the oft used character into an unrelated backdrop.) Marvel's resident lycanthrope, Werewolf by Night, appeared in several issues, but for whatever reason his exploits within the magazines were relegated to prose features. Man-Thing (who bore an uncanny resemblance to DC's Swamp Thing, and both of whom took their cues from Airboy Comics' The Heap) was reintroduced in the third issue with a retelling of his origin, but like Werewolf by Night he only came back for the occasional prose piece, apparently content with hanging out in the pages of the four-color comic *Adventures into Fear* (1970–75). Daimon Hellstrom, the Son of Satan, was previewed in the same issue, despite his hellish adventures already being serialized in the four-color *Marvel Spotlight* (1971–77) the previous month.

The flagship character for *Tales of the Zombie* (1973–75) was one of the title's namesakes, a revenant by the name of Simon Garth who was a carry over from a Golden Age comic story by Stan Lee and Bill Everett that first appeared in *Menace* v1#5 (Jul 1953). Garth, the money grubbing "Coffee King of New Orleans" turned *zuvembie,* was an evocative figure, but his inability to reason, emote, or interact with anyone except as a mindless automaton limited the stories. Much like the Man-Thing, Garth was unable to carry the stories by himself, and was little more than a disinterested spectator until forced by desperate comic book writers to intervene in the proceedings. This would be the only reoccurring character for the entirety of the magazine's eleven issue run, although the on-topic supernatural hero Brother Voodoo would put in the occasional appearance, having been wrested from the pages of *Strange Tales.* As could be surmised, the rest of the material was devoted to Haitian voodoo or zombie related

themes. The writing, art and format was typical of the other books in Marvel's horror line, although *Tales of the Zombie* boasted some of the nicest Boris Vallejo covers ever to grace their magazine line. The series lasted ten issues plus an annual; the last book was comprised of reprints, mostly from the first two issues. (At least one source lists the annual as the eleventh issue, although there's nothing in it to indicate it as such.) It is surprising that Garth and his mindless brethren could keep the readership motivated for any such length of time, especially considering that most of the material in which they found themselves involved was uninspired drudgery.

Daimon Hellstrom, Ihe Son of Satan—as envisioned by Michael Ploog—fends of the minions of Hell in a preview of the character in Monsters Unleashed V1#3 (November 1973) Marvel Comics Group

IN A CAVE DEEP IN THE HAITIAN FOREST YOU STAND UNMOVING... UNTHINKING... UNFEELING... IN SOMBER TESTIMONY TO THE POWER OF VOODOO.
YOUR FLESH IS SUNKEN AND YELLOWED, YOUR EYES ROLLED HORRIBLY UPWARD, YOUR FEATURES DEVOID OF EXPRESSION.
YOU ARE, IN SHORT, A DEAD MAN!... A CORPSE... A LIFELESS HUMAN HUSK... AND YET, YOU ARE MORE THAN THAT. FAR MORE.
FOR THERE ARE NIGHTS WHEN YOU WALK AMONG THE LIVING... EVIL NIGHTS THAT SEEM TO SUMMON YOU FORTH. YOU, SIMON GARTH...
THE ZOMBIE
WHEN THE GODS CRAVE FLESH!
By STEVE GERBER & PABLO MARCOS
WRITER ARTIST
5

Steve Gerber and Pablo Marcos give deus ex machina Simon Garth center stage in “When the Gods Crave Flesh!” Splash page from Tales of the Zombie V1#3 (January 1974) Marvel Comics Group

Ironically, the major recurring character in *Vampire Tales* (1973–75)—Morbius the Living Vampire—was not a supernatural denizen like the rest of that book's occupants, but a scientifically created bloodsucker who ran around in superhero style tights. (His first appearance was as Peter Parker's adversary in *The Amazing Spider-Man* #101 [Oct 1971], and after his run in the horror magazines he would return to on-call guest star status, duking it out with Marvel Comics' Nietzschean heroes and villains.) Apparently to balance out Dracula's ruthlessness and ambivalence towards his own cruelty, Morbius was the angst ridden bloodsucker who succumbed to his cravings reluctantly, and only then after much whining about his lot in life. Although a likeable enough character, he didn't have the dignity of a Barnabas Collins to garner him the respect he needed to survive. (To cut him some slack, it must be tough keeping one's dignity when you sport a pug nose and are forced to wear red and blue jammies twenty four seven.)

Enrique Romero's rendering of Satana, the Devil's Daughter, strikes a pose in "This Side of Hell." The Haunt of Horror V1#4 (November 1974) Marvel Comics Group

The Morbius stories also suffered the same fate as many of the serialized monsters, specifically the lack of a stable creative team. His earliest exploits were illustrated by an overworked Pablo Marcos, but later stories displayed no creative consistency. (Some even suffered from uninspired work by otherwise talented names like Gil Kane and Tom Sutton.)

Vampire Tales also offered the earliest exploits of Satana, the Devil's Daughter, but the position of the resident Satanic seductress was eventually filled by the aforementioned Lilith, Daughter of Dracula. (Sultry and exotic Satana would soon be transferred to the pages of *The Haunt of Horror,* where her Hades hopping would be much more on-topic.) A succubus by trade, Satana was—like her brother Daimon—usually at odds with her devilish dad, although her loyalty wasn't as much in question as her sibling's. Introduced via a throwaway four page story, Satana became a somewhat intricate character. With at least one episode beautifully rendered by Warren regular Esteban Maroto, it was the stories that involved her childhood friend, the incubus Zannarth, that were most interesting, if only because of the odd sexual politics that resulted. (These particular stories were adeptly illustrated by Enrique Romero, an artist famous for his

syndicated *Modesty Blaise* newspaper strips.)

Esteban Maroto goes all out in “The Drifting Snow.” Vampire TalesV1#4 (April 1974) Marvel Comics

The eighth issue of *Vampire Tales* introduced Blade the Vampire Slayer, one of the more enduring characters to appear in its pages. Originally something of a supporting character for *The Tomb of Dracula,* Blade soon accrued his own following. Practically forgotten for many years after the series went under, he was resuscitated by both Marvel and Hollywood in 1998, with a Wesley Snipes vehicle that spawned a silver screen franchise. Of the black heroes to be created by Marvel in the seventies, Blade was one of the more interesting; ostracized for the fact he was part vampire, an effective albeit not particularly subtle metaphor for racism. It is no surprise he should be one of the most beloved heroes to come from Marvel's early seventies horror books.

Of all the b&w horror magazines produced by Marvel at the time, *Vampire Tales* was probably home to most of the better stand alone stories. With pieces like "The Drifting Snow' (v1#4), a lyrical piece by Tony Isabella and Maroto based on a short story by August Derleth; the classic reprint'At the Stroke of Midnight' (v1#2), which displayed Jim Steranko's mastery of sequential art; to the original (albeit anti-climactic) "The Vampire Wants Blood' (v1#5), by regulars Moench and Mayerick, Marvel made some valiant attempts to match the level of quality that was Warren's watershed, and occasionally succeeded.

The following year, Marvel Comics decided to expand its line of b&w magazines. The first, *The Haunt of Horror* (1974–75), started as yet another supernatural horror anthology, but by the second issue the editors sharpened its focus. Driven by the ongoing serializations of Gabriel the Devil Hunter, Marvel sought to cash in on the growing interest in demonic possession fueled by William Friedkin's blockbuster *The Exorcist* (1974) and the William Blatty book that inspired it. At the same time Gabriel made his debut, Satana had found a much more accommodating home within the pages of *The Haunt of Horror* as well.

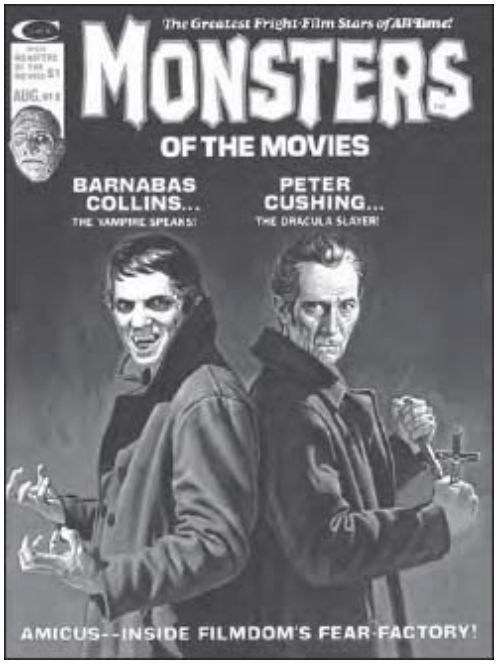
Gabriel (his surname was never revealed to the reader) is an ex-priest who gives up preaching for full time soul saving having successfully cast an evil spirit from himself, at the cost of his faith and his right eye. Aided by his female assistant Desadia, who boasts some premonitory powers, Gabriel spends each issue going through the motions, having turned exorcism into a rather dull, predictable science. It's difficult to lay the blame at the writer's feet, considering the inherent limitations of the demonic possession subgenre. (Writer Moench makes the claim in an editorial that, while writing

the Gabriel stories, he was plagued by a series of obviously supernatural occurrences, much like Blatty said he was when writing his novel, and the cast and crew of Friedkin's film. These tongue in cheek assertions are a much better read than many of the stories themselves.) With an eye towards evil spirits and the devil himself, the rest of the stories were equally turgid or trite, and would only perturb those readers who took Ouija boards seriously. The only truly shocking thing that could be found within its pages was the occasional stab at a taboo subject (e.g. incest), but the handling seemed just as gratuitous as the watered down epithets. Artistically, most of the stories were sub par, although the series did boast a few nice covers, in particular Jad's contribution to the third issue. Harkening back in some respect to the weird menace pulps, the deliciously painted cover depicted several rotting corpses lumbering out of a swamp to accost a hapless victim cowering in a provocatively torn dress.

Hmmm… Jad's cover art looks kind of familiar, don't you think? The Haunt of Horror V1#3 (September 1974) Marvel Comics Group

The second new horror magazine to be published by Marvel that year, *Monsters of the Movies* (1974–75), was not an oversized comic, but was instead cast in the mold of *Famous Monsters of Filmland* (1958–83).

Forgoing illustrated stories for articles on and reviews of horror films, *Monsters of the Movies* gave its inspiration a run for its money with well written pieces, collections of rare stills, and up to the minute film coverage. Ultimately, though, it simply could not compete with a magazine that had established itself seventeen years earlier; *Monsters of the Movies* fate was the same as the many other fan magazines that fought for shelf space on magazine racks during the horror glut of the mid seventies.



A showdown between Jonathan Frid's Barnabas Collins and Peter Cushing's van Helsing? Only in the dreams of a desperate seven-year old. Cover art by Bob Larkin for Monsters of the Movies V1#8 (August 1975) Marvel Comics Group

The staff of *Monsters of the Movies* remained stable throughout its run, and included two writers who had made something of a name for themselves outside Marvel and the magazine industry. The first, Donald F Glut (1944–), was the creator of the exceptional Gold Key horror comic *The Occult Files of Doctor Spektor* (1973–77). Today, Glut writes and directs his own independent horror and exploitation films with titles like *The Erotic Rites of Countess Dracula* (2001) and *The Mummy's Kiss* (2003). The second, Ron Hay-dock (1940–77), was also an actor who appeared in several of Ray

Dennis Steckler's no budget efforts, including *Rat Pfink a Boo Boo* (1965), *Lemon Grove Kids Meet the Monster* (1965), *Body Fever* (1969) and *Blood Shack* (1971). Sadly, Ron died in a hit and run accident only a few years after his respectable stint on the magazine.

There were several other Marvel titles that only made it an issue or two before being cancelled in 1975. *Masters of Terror* featured illustrated versions of horror classics by the likes of Robert Bloch, Robert E Howard and HP Love-craft. Most readers were probably put off by the fact that most of these stories were reprints less than a year or two old (much like the annuals produced for many of the Marvel horror magazines). *Legion of Monsters* made an effort to pick up where *Dracula Lives!* and *Monsters Unleashed!* left off, continuing the Frankenstein and Dracula cycles that were started therein, but it didn't survive past the first issue.

That same year, Marvel Comics started the self referential *Marvel Preview,* a publication that devoted each issue to a different character or subject. Four of these issues would hold interest to fans of Marvel's horror outings. The first (v1#3) was devoted to *Blade, the Vampire Slayer;* the second (v1#8)—a continuation of the cancelled *Legion of Monsters*—also included Blade as well as Morbius; the third (v1#12) was a continuation of *The Haunt of Horror* and featured Lilith, Daughter of Dracula; and the last (v1#16) was titularly the third issue of *Masters of Terror,* although it included a story with Lilith and strayed from the classics presented in its predecessors.

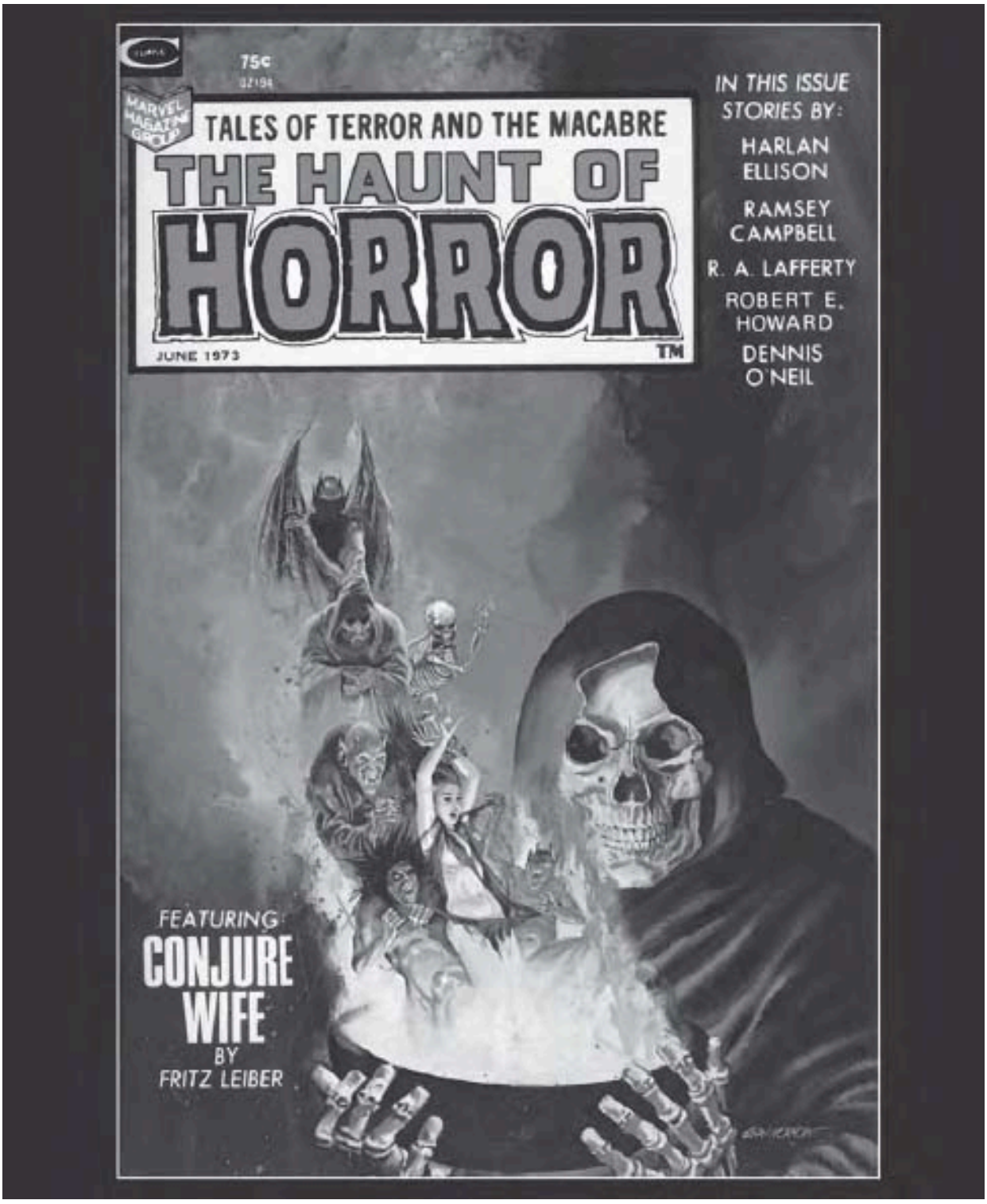
The eighth issue of *Marvel Preview* included an overview of the short-lived run of Marvel's b&w horror publications, written by a chap who had written voluminous letters that appeared in those self same magazines, albeit often in a truncated form. Not nearly as critical as the letters that preceded it, this article congratulated the run before posing the question as to why the books were cancelled. Obviously, those in power at Marvel could have answered this query for its readers, but instead left the piece hanging on its own question mark. In retrospect, we can assume their short-lived success was due in part to the glutting of the market: Marvel had joined Warren, Skywald, Eerie, and a slew of fly by night publishers, in vying for teenagers' pocket change in the mid seventies. It may have also had something to do with the fact that many of the line's more popular characters— The Frankenstein Monster, Werewolf by Night, Dracula, Man-Thing, Son of Satan, et al—already had their own comic series which were not only in full

color but could also be had for a third of the admission. Although Marvel's magazine appearances tackled more adult themes and were a little more explicit than their all ages counterparts, the sex and violence wasn't nearly as plentiful as that found in many rival publications.

Looking back at the entirety of Marvel's b&w horror magazines, it's hard to believe that most of it was produced in less than three years. For better or worse, Marvel's books had a very distinct look and feel, even when artists and writers crossed over from other publishers for freelance work. Much of the material was produced by house artists and writers; although not always incompetent, their work was rarely exceptional. Still, the pages of each of Marvel's magazines would usually be graced by at least one notable creator, whether it be Michael Kaluta or Esteban Maroto or Jim Steranko. These books also showcased such promising newcomers as Frank Brunner, Val Mayerick and Ralph Reese alongside inspired pieces by such underrated artists as Alfredo Alcala, Gene Colan and Tom Sutton. Although the painted covers weren't always first rate, Marvel's line boasted its fair share of striking cover art by the likes of Neal Adams, Jad and Boris Vallejo. (The reprints offered in the earlier issues of Marvel's horror comic magazines gave the reader the opportunity to compare artists' older work with the new. Some, like Gene Colan, not only adapted well to the changing styles but also evolved gracefully. Others, like Paul Reinman, could not make the transition, and their work suffered because of the forced demands the market dictated.) One only needs to look at *Marvel Preview* v1#8 (Fall 1976)—a magazine that is damn near as good as anything Warren ever produced—to see what Marvel's bullpen was capable of. In this issue, secured behind a stunning Ken Barr cover depicting a face off between Blade and Morbius, are several beautifully rendered pieces, artistically some of the best works to be found from Colan, Mayerick and Ploog during the seventies.

With the demise of their magazine sized horror anthologies, most of Marvel's smaller, full color counterparts followed suit. The success of such titles as *Chamber of Chills* (1972–76), *Crypt of Shadows* (1973–75), *Dead of Night* (1973–75), *Tomb of Darkness* (1974–76) and *Vault of Evil* (1973–75) paled in comparison to Marvel's solo books like *Ghost Rider* (1973–83), *Tomb of Dracula* and *Werewolf by Night* (1972–77), although these only survived the others by a few years, and only then by sacrificing their horror content for more superhero related antics.

Marvel tried to resurrect *The Tomb of Dracula* as a b&w magazine in 1979 (having made a lot of ballyhoo about killing off the character for good the same year), but it went down for the count (ouch) a year later after only six issues. Since then, Marvel has sporadically tried to revive such monster related characters, but they bear little relation to the original creations spawned during what was—artistically speaking—their last successful attempt to exploit the horror market.



Cover art by Gray Morrow for The Haunt of Horror V1#1 (June 1973)
Marvel Comics Group

Sloane felt his mouth forced open from within. His skin ached as if a million needles were being forced through. But they were hairs; and his shoulders slumped as his hands weighed down his arms, formed into claws, and dragged him at last to stare down at the unconscious caretaker.

Excerpt from‘Night Beat’ by Ramsey Campbell,
The Haunt of Horror v1#1 (Jun 1973) Marvel Comics Group

Spot illustration by Dan Green from The Haunt of Horror V1#1 (June 1973)
Marvel Comics Group

ALMOST A YEAR before *The Haunt of Horror* was published as a b&w comic horror magazine, Marvel had produced two issues of a mostly prose digest with the same name. Not unlike *Amazing Stories, Galaxy* or *Worlds of If,* this 5” x *7½”* publication anthologized horror stories by some of the best names in fantastic literature alongside relative newcomers, accompanied by the occasional pen and ink spot illustrations. Unfortunately, despite the comparative exceptional quality, these two issues would be the only foray into publishing prose heavy digests for Marvel Comics.

Similar to its illustrated counterparts, *The Haunt of Horror* was produced by Sol Brodsky, which might explain why Marvel recycled the title when they later expanded their magazine line. Both issues of *The Haunt of Horror* cite Stan Lee as publisher, Gerard Conway as editor and Roy Thomas as consulting editor. Sci fi writer George Alec Effinger functioned as associate editor on the first issue, but was replaced by Len Wein (co-creator of DC’s *Swamp Thing)* by issue two and apparently demoted to the role of assistant editor.

The first issue, published in June of 1973, included short stories and novelettes by such veterans and newcomers as Robert E Howard (1906–36), Fritz Leiber (1910–92), RA Lafferty (1914–2002), Harlan Ellison (1934–), Ramsey Campbell (1946–) and AA Attanasio (1951–) as well as an article by Dennis O’Neil (1932–). Featured was one of Howard’s entries in the Cthulhu mythos, ‘Usurp the Night,’ which was later reprinted under the more Lovecraftian title “The Hoofed Thing.’ This issue also serialized the first half of Fritz Leiber’s classic novel of the supernatural *Conjure Wife,* which had been filmed as *Weird Woman* in 1944, and *Night of the Eagle aka Burn, Witch, Burn!* in 1962.

Spot illustration for “Loup Garou” by Michael Ploog from The Haunt of Horror V1#1 (June 1973) Marvel Comics Group

The premiere issue no doubt turned heads with its stunning cover art, beautifully rendered in acrylics by Gray Morrow. The interiors featured notable artists Frank Brunner, who would go on to do some exceptional work for the early issues of *Dr Strange* (1974–87), and Michael Ploog, who produced what are considered by many to be the definitive versions of Marvel monsters-cum-superheroes, *The Frankenstein Monster, Ghost Rider, Man-Thing* and *Werewolf by Night;* and Dan Green.

The second issue, published in August of the same year, didn’t live up to the quality of the first, although it made a valiant attempt. Fritz Leiber was back with the final chapters of *Conjure Wife.* So was Harlan Ellison, although his contribution, ‘Neon,’ had appeared in the previous issue with the last two pages accidentally reversed. In an attempt to console the irate wordsmith, the editors in their best interest re-ran the story as it was originally intended.

The seven remaining “Tales of Terror and the Macabre” were supplied by such names as Anne McCaffrey (1926–), Ron Goulart (1933–), Howard Waldrop (1946–) and Arthur Byron Cover (1950–). Also included was a novelette by Effinger, published under the pseudonym John K Diomede, possibly to avoid the accusation of having taken advantage of his editorial position (the piece would later appear in the first issue of *The Haunt of Horror* comic magazine under his given name). Rounding out the issue was

a filler article on the fabled city of Atlantis by Lin Carter, and a new short story by O'Neil. Famed pulp and paperback cover illustrator Frank Kelly Freas (1922–2005) supplied the eyecatching and colorful cover art, and the interior illustrations included contributions from Eugene *(The Tomb of DracuLa)* Colan, and a young, overworked Walter Simonson, who would famously re-invent *The Mighty Thor* in 1983.

The'In the Wind' column in the second issue touted that the third issue would contain 'The Running of Ladyhound' by John Jakes, 'Fire of Spring' by George Zebrowski, 'Goldfish' by RA Lafferty, 'The Night People' by Alan Brennart, 'Writer's Curse' by Ramsey Campbell, and articles by Carter and O'Neil. Advertisements for the aborted third issue also appeared in several of Marvel's magazine titles, which gave a sense of false hope to those souls who appreciated the book's efforts to market quality horror fiction in an affordable format. Even more frustrating, the advert showcased the cover art for the forthcoming publication: a truly nightmarish cover painting by returning artist Freas, which was unexpectedly horrific considering that he had made a name for himself with more lighthearted fantasy and sci fi illustrations.

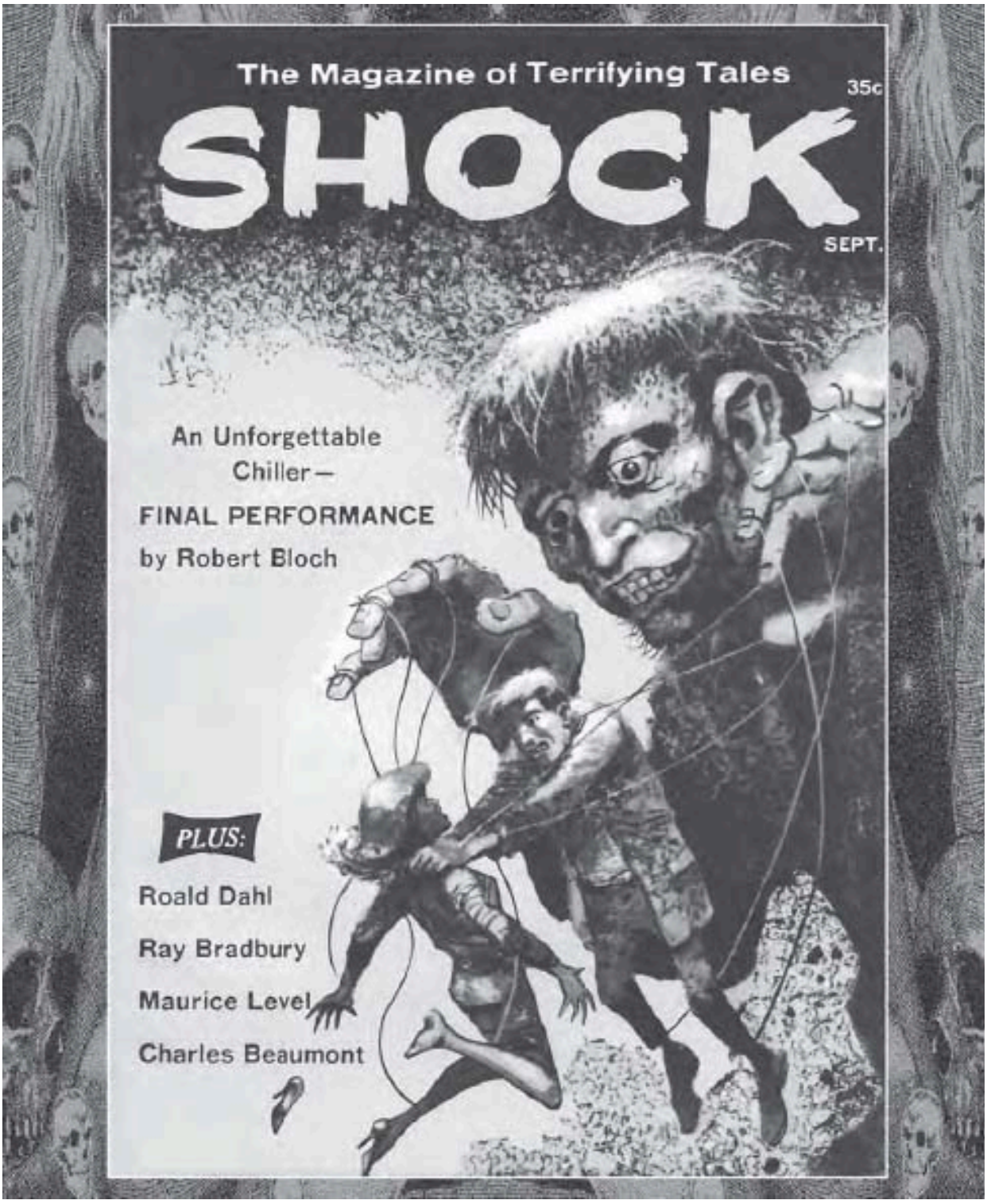
THE HAUNT OF HORROR
YOU HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR, BUT FEAR ITSELF!
TALES OF TERROR AND THE MACABRE!
FEATURED IN ISSUE #3:
"THE RUNNING OF THE DEMONHOUND" BY JOHN JAKES
"GOLDFISH"—A NEFARIOUS PIECE OF NIGHTMARE BY R. A. LAFFERTY
"THE NEW WITCHCRAFT" BY LIN CARTER
"THE NIGHT PEOPLE" BY ALAN BRENNART
164 PAGES OF CHILLING PROSE FICTION AND SINISTER ARTWORK BY THE MODERN MASTERS OF HORROR!
ONLY 75¢
—ON SALE AUG. 21!

Advertisement for and cover art by Frank Kelly Freas for the aborted The Haunt of Horror V1#3 (1973) Marvel Comics Group

Not surprisingly, some of the stories slated for the ultimately canned issue later appeared as prose only pieces in the illustrated second series of *The Haunt of Horror.* In the editorial for the first magazine sized issue, the reader is told flat out that its previous prose heavy incarnation simply flopped. Although the field of sci fi had been supporting innumerable digest sized fiction magazines since the demise of the pulps in the fifties, horror fans of the seventies were apparently more visual, as every attempt to do the same for this genre would—by this time—fold after only a few issues. Thus, despite Marvel's best attempt to produce a quality product, it was a sad fact that the market simply couldn't bear it…at least to their satisfaction.

For quite a few years now, high grade copies of these two publications have fetched a tidy sum on the collector's market due to their scarcity and the names involved, many of whom had yet to establish themselves as fan favorites. Since many of the best stories were reprints or later collected in paperback anthologies, one could probably assume that the casual readers of fantastic fiction tended not to hold onto their copies. Additionally, the most fervent of collectors from the time—comic book fans—had little use for the prose format. In essence, these odd ducks were discarded and forgotten, an uncharacteristic attempt by Marvel to break out of the comic related fields with which their name had become synonymous.

- Marvel monster magazine checklist, see page 285
- Marvel monster magazine artist & writer checklist, see page 286
- The *Haunt of Horror* digest index, see page 284



Cover art by Jack Davis for Shock V1#3 (September 1960) Winston Publications, Inc.

In *a sense, it is unfortunate that the story I must now relate should be so largely a thing of undetermined shadows, of half shaped hints and forbidden inferences. Otherwise, it could never be written by human hand or read by human eye. My own slight part in this hideous drama was limited to its last act; and to me its earlier scenes were merely a remote and ghastly legend.*

Excerpt from 'The Nameless Offspring' by
Clark Ashton Smith, *Magazine of Horror*
v6#3 (Summer 1970) Acme Publishing/
Health Knowledge, Inc.

THE SIXTIES saw a resurgence of interest in the horror genre, although American publications devoted to weird fiction still struggled, overwhelmed by the sci fi and detective magazines that dominated the market. Titles like *Fantastic* (1952–80), *Galaxy Sci fi* (1950–95) and *Worlds of If* (1952–72) shared newsstand space with *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine* (1956–) and *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* (1941–), but this left little room on the shelf for the less appreciated genres, all of which were descendents of the pulp magazines that had flourished only a few decades before.

The earlier part of the twentieth century saw the growth of the pulp magazine, a label that has since been applied to a style of writing made popular by the format. The originator of the pulp format, Frank Munsey (1854–1925), is quoted as saying,"the story is worth more than the paper it is printed on." These periodicals—roughly 7" x 10" and printed on economical

and thus highly acidic paper stock—were the literary equivalent of comic books and moving pictures: a cheap, mass market form of disposable entertainment geared towards the lower and middle class. By the thirties, pulps had acquired a mass appeal, touching upon a wide range of demographics. Some genres were gender specific, romance and men's adventure being two polar examples, and although most pulps were intended for adults, it wasn't uncommon for a title to hold some appeal to younger readers. In the years to come, these magazines would garner a bad reputation due to a handful of titles aimed specifically at a misogynistic male market, undoubtedly a backlash in response to the growing woman's movement. Pulps devoted to horror and weird fiction were no exception, and were (directly or indirectly) responsible for what would now be rightfully considered politically incorrect entertainment.

With America's involvement in WWII, paper shortages forced publishers to trim down the size of their periodicals; by the fifties, all but a few were published in a more condensed digest format, still utilized by publishers to this day. The fifties also saw a newfound conservatism, which quashed those titles geared towards the public's more prurient interests.

During the reign of the pulps, horror was generally referred to as weird fiction, and encompassed everything from traditional supernatural fiction to the sexually aggressive 'weird menace' fare. The latter was a sub-genre very specific to the thirties, which invariably had women abducted and tortured by inhuman villains armed with insidious devices or supernatural powers, while the story's low rent hero made his way to the killer's lair delayed by various traps, or forced into mortal combat with monstrous creatures or more mundane minions. These weird menace pulps were extremely popular in their time, but this had little to do with the surefire combination of cross genre elements; what defined them were the lurid covers, which often depicted a scene in the story to which all the action was leading the reader, if indeed it was employed at all.

Pulp predecessor to the horror digests.. Strange Stories V4#2 (October 1940)
Better Publications Inc

Suffice to say, these covers would immediately catch the ready eye of many male readers browsing the newsstand, as sex and violence were their two key selling points. In this case, the beloved foundations of American entertainment were defined by nubile and obviously vulnerable young women in various stages of undress—whatever clothes remaining often tattered and just barely concealing their perky (i.e. gravity defying) head-lights—being accosted by deformed (i.e. impotent) masterminds or steroid-ridden evildoers in masks who could never get a date in high school because they were just too dang creepy. Torture devices—traditional Spanish or even state of the art—littered the scene, usually a basement or cave or similarly dank environment where the inhuman killers could carry out their perverse pleasures without interference. The muscled superhero could often be seen in the background, desperate to reach his shackled prize but distracted by half human beasts or maladjusted cultists. One needn’t be Freud to see exactly what drove some sexually immature readers into the arms of the weird menace pulps.

Despite the abundance of these sordid outings, more traditionally macabre fiction still had a place among the pulp readership. Much of it continued the American tradition that Edgar Allan Poe (1809–49) had initiated the previous century, although those stories that evoked anything in the way of real poetry were, not surprisingly, sparse. At its best, pulp horror fiction was literate, imaginative and engaging. At its worst, it was not far removed from the gothic chapbooks and penny dreadfuls of the nineteenth century.

Most of the titles devoted to weird fiction had modest runs; *Strange Tales of Mystery & Terror* (1931–33), *Horror Stories* (1935–41), *Strange Stories* (1939–41), *Unknown* (1939–43), and *Famous Fantastic Mysteries* (1939–53) are a few examples of those whose impact was more than negligible. The most esteemed and influential, *Weird Tales* (1923–54), boasts a longevity denied its peers, thanks to its persistent and unrivaled level of quality (it was revived no less than twice, once in the seventies, then again in the eighties).

This series was almost singlehandedly responsible for kickstarting the careers of such notable fantasy writers as Seabury Quinn (1889–1964), Clark Ashton Smith (1893–1961), Robert E Howard (1906–36), August Derleth (1909–71), Robert Bloch (1917–94), Henry S Whitehead, and—of course—a man whose name is inadvertently synonymous with the publication, Howard Phillips Lovecraft (1890–1937). *Weird Tales* also benefited from artistry by the likes of J Allen St John (1872–1957), Hannes Bok (1914–64), Virgil Finlay (1914–71), Frank Kelly Freas, and the inexhaustible Margaret Brundage (1900–76), whose exquisitely painted covers are as inseparable from the publication as is Lovecraft’s prose.

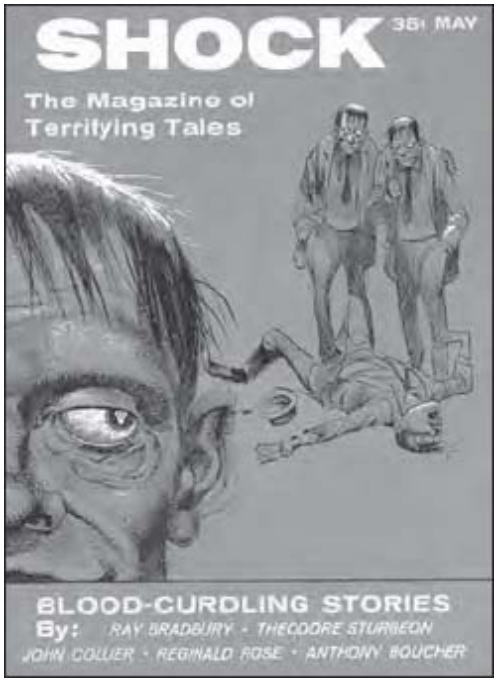
Unfortunately, the fifties were not a prosperous time for traditional horror. In film, the genre had been all but absorbed by sci fi, re-inventing itself in the guise of alien beings intent on wiping out mankind and having their way with our women, or giant insects mutated by atomic radiation that viewed our species as an all-you-can-eat buffet. In comics, the Kefauver Senate Hearings and Comics Code Authority had emasculated the genre, leaving it an impotent, practically unmarketable commodity free of the depiction of walking corpses that was somehow responsible for the growing scourge of juvenile delinquency. In fiction, it fared little better. With the demise of *Weird Tales* in 1954, weird fiction suffered its greatest blow, leaving only the occasional paperback anthology to fill the void.

In 1960, two attempts were made to revitalize the tradition of weird fiction and capitalize on the growing interest in all things horror. Unfortunately, these two periodicals, *Fear!* (“Tales of the Terror-Filled Unknown”) and *Shock* (“The Magazine of Terrifying Tales”), have between them only five issues that never breached another year. Both titles were introduced in May of 1960, *Fear!* boasting a grisly painted cover depicting a scarecrow making short work of its eponymous prey, and *Shock* featuring a striking three-color, pen and ink illustration by ex-EC Comics artist Jack Davis. Both of these pint sized magazines featured an array of both burgeoning and established writers, newer unpublished fiction alongside classic reprints that even dated back to the previous century.

Cover art by “GAP” for Fear! V1#1 (May 1960) Great American Publications, Inc.

It is no surprise, though, that *Shock* outlived *Fear!*, even if it was only by one issue. Whereas the first issue of *Fear!* filled its pages with work by Wilkie Collins (1824–89), John Jakes (1932-) and Hal Ellison, whilst *Shock* had the likes of Anthony Boucher nÉ William Anthony Parker White (1911–

68), Ray Bradbury (1920–) and Theodore Sturgeon gracing theirs. (Much of the material in *Shock* was reprinted from the aforementioned pulp magazines, but had been long out of print by the time it resurfaced here.) The artwork in both titles was sparse and unexceptional, but *Shock* had the upper hand with the occasional Davis spot illustration.


SHOCK
35¢ MAY
The Magazine of Terrifying Tales
BLOOD-CURDLING STORIES
By: RAY BRADBURY • THEODORE STURGEON
JOHN COLLIER • REGINALD ROSE • ANTHONY BOUCHER

Cover art by Jack Davis for Shock V1#1 (May 1960) Winston Publications, Inc.

The second outing for *Fear!* proved its last gasp; this was not surprising, in that it boasted almost nothing in the way of saleable names. *Shock's* second issue, on the other hand, offered more (and more inspired) work by Davis in addition to a similarly impressive list of wordsmiths. The third issue of *Shock* continued the tradition of excellence, but alas, it was insufficient to establish a readership that would carry it into a new year.

In 1963 and 1966, two very notable weird fiction titles were published by one Health Knowledge, Inc aka Acme. Although the publisher's bread and butter was the girlie magazines churned out under their more 'hygienic' imprint throughout the sixties, they were also responsible for a number of digest magazines which included sci fi *(Famous Sci fi),* crime fiction

(Chase), men's adventure *(World Wide Adventure)*, and parapsychology *(Exploring the Unknown)*. (They were also behind the short-lived monster magazine *Shriek*—covered in more detail in the next section of this book—and sex manuals like *The Real Life Guide to Sex & Marriage*, which was probably how they established themselves, if the "Health Knowledge, Inc." is any indication.) All their fiction titles were published in an atypical format, slightly smaller than the average digest publication and stapled instead of squarebound.

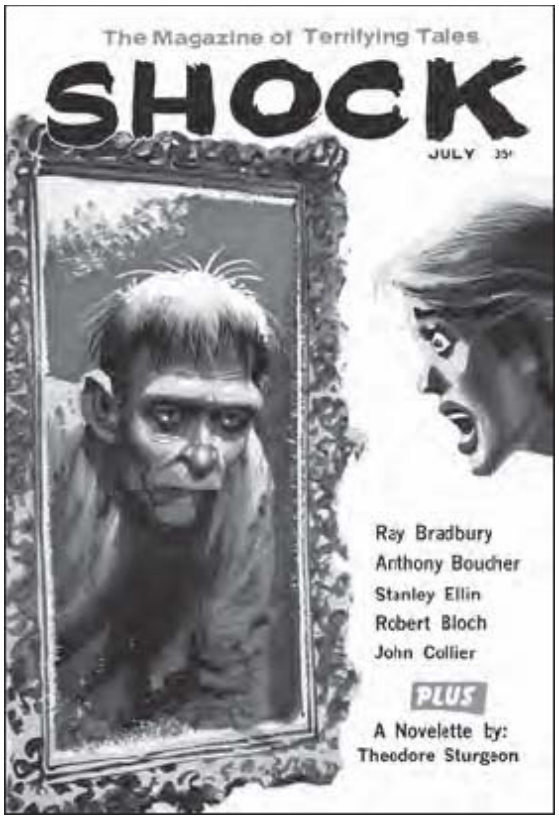
The first publication from Acme, *Magazine of Horror* (1963–71), carried the terse cover subtitle of "Bizarre ♦ Frightening ♦ Gruesome" and the contents page expanded upon it by claiming its penchant for "The Bizarre and the Unusual" but to be more specific, the focus was on gothic and outright supernatural fare. The *Magazine of Horror* started out offering a good balance of new material and vintage reprints, but it was later weighted down with stories in its thirty six issue run that were originally printed in such pulp magazines as *Weird Tales* and *Strange Tales*. (With very little diligence, the reader could find the small print disclaimer in the indicia: "While the greatest diligence has been used to ascertain the owners of rights, and to secure necessary permissions, the editor and publisher wish to offer their apologies in any possible case of accidental infringements." Although copyright infringement wasn't the issue then as it has been in recent years, the publishers were obviously trying to cover their ass if it turned out one of the'borrowed' pieces wasn't actually in the public domain.) Like many other Acme digest sized periodicals at the time, the earlier issues *of Magazine of Horror* bore text only covers, which undoubtedly hurt sales from the get-go. By the sixth issue, cover art was introduced; despite the fact that some of the covers were in full color, the renderings did not always adhere to the higher artistic standards of the material within. By 1967, the magazine had found its look, which would stay with it until the end.

The latter half of the book's thirty six issue run boasted a consistent design that would—for all intents and purposes—be carried over to all of Acme's related publications. Each issue would use a different primary or secondary color as the backdrop, with the cover divided roughly in half with a boxed illustration on the left and the issue's highlights as text on the right. From the inception of this new cover layout, the artwork was almost exclusively supplied by Virgil Finlay, borrowed in much the same way from previously published pulp magazines as the text therein. Not only did they

complement the contents in that the art was derived from the same source, Finlay's finely rendered pen and ink illustrations—even the most fantastic subjects drawn realistically, utilizing meticulous line work or pointillism to give it added depth—gave the magazine an air of class that was restricted by the cheap format.

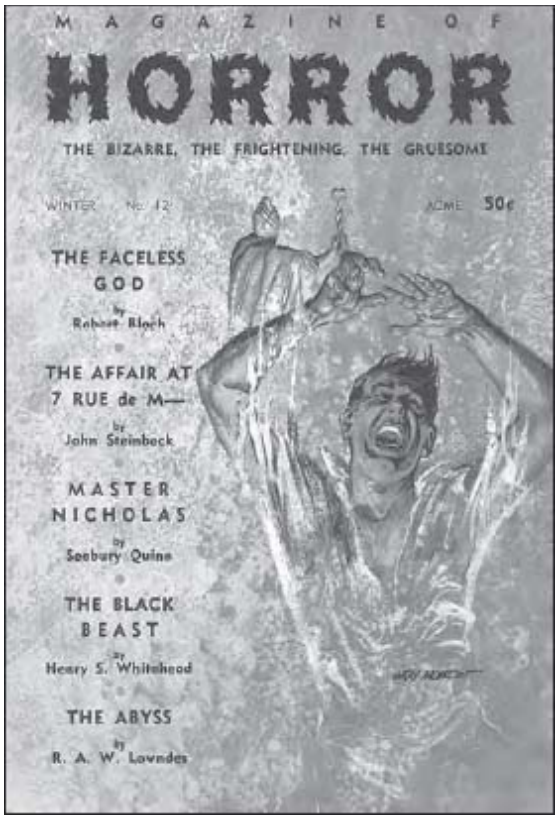
Prior to his stint with Acme publishing and *Magazine of Horror,* editor Robert AW Lowndes (1916–98) had secured himself as editor on the various incarnations of the long running pulp turned digest *Future Sci fi* from 1943 to 1960. Somehow, he also found the time to contribute his editorial skills to such obscure genre publications as *Dynamic Sci fi* (1952–54), but few of these lasted for any length of time. In 1991, Lowndes was inducted into the First Fandom Hall of Fame for his numerous contributions to the field of sci fi.

Lowndes—equal parts fan and professional— had been a contemporary of HP Lovecraft, and was also an author with four novels to his credit, and a prolific short story writer whose works had appeared in such pulp magazines as *Future Fantasy & Sci fi.* (The inability to catalog Lowndes' short stories is due to the fact that he utilized innumerable pen names and also ghosted for various publishers using their one-size-fits-all house names; whatever the case, some sources claim he had as many as fifty pseudonyms to his credit.) The fact that he had briefly corresponded with Lovecraft explains his criticisms of Lovecraft pastiches, which he voiced often in the pages of his magazines.



Cover art by Jack Davis for Shock V1#2 (July 1960) Winston Publications, Inc.

In addition to letters, *Magazine of Horror* garnered audience participation by offering a double barreled 'Reader's Preference Page' with which the avid fan could rate and comment on the stories for each issue. The results were published in the following issue as 'The Reckoning;' although it never filled more than half a page, it is obvious from the brief responses that Lowndes took the feedback seriously.



Striking cover art by Gray Morrow for Magazine of Horror V2#6/#12 (Winter 1965) Acme Publishing/Health Knowledge, Inc. From the collection of Gary Hill.

Published by Acme three years after introducing *Magazine of Horror* and lasting eighteen issues was their second stab at a weird fiction digest magazine, *Startling Mystery Stories* (1966–71), which counter-offered its older sibling's "Bizarre ♦ Frightening ♦ Gruesome" with "Unusual ♦ Eerie ♦ Strange." (Not much of a stretch in offering a distinction, but an amiable attempt nonetheless.) Although its leanings were towards mystery as opposed to the outright supernatural, much of the fiction still easily qualified as weird fiction. Otherwise, this publication adhered to the curriculum *Magazine of Horror* had already established, and so it followed suit with the predominant pulp reprints and occasional new tale. Either out of continuity, or laziness, the 'Reader's Preference Page' and ' The Reckoning' were recycled verbatim.

What makes *Startling Mystery Stories* stand out from the other titles discussed here—at least in terms of importance from a historical literary

perspective, as well as market demand among serious collectors—is that Acme's second horror periodical published Stephen King's first two short stories as a paid professional. In *Startling Mystery Stories* v1#6 (Fall 1967) the bestselling author-to-be made his debut with 'The Glass Floor,' and then made an encore in v2#4/#10 (Spring 1969) with 'The Reaper's Image.' Even many hardcore King enthusiasts are unfamiliar with these two publications, as they are rarely listed in online bibliographies devoted to his prolific career, (which often gloss over his pre-Carrie work, due at least in part to the fact that most of it was published in mid to lower scale girlie magazines like *Cavalier* [Dugent Publishing Corp.] from 1972 to 1976). Of course, the fact it isn't exactly common knowledge does nothing to dissuade book dealers from offering their tattered copies *of Startling Mystery Stories* for a premium, with the books bearing price tags of $350 or more for the first King appearance, and upwards of $150 for the second.

The rising interest in the paranormal as it pertained to real life exhibited itself in Acme's *Exploring the Unknown,* which proved to be a comparable but no less silly publication in the vein of the long running *Fate Magazine* (1948–). Although not presented as fiction, it is safe to say that it had no more bearing on reality than its weird fiction counterparts, although many gullible readers undoubtedly relied on the distinction. (Introduced sometime in the early sixties, *Exploring the Unknown* ran for at least forty three issues and looks to have ceased publication in late 1967 or early 1968, although I can't verify any of this at the time of going to press.) One could probably assume that Acme Publishing dug itself a grave by flooding their own market in the early seventies, cramming into their already full stable such reiterative titles as *Weird Terror Tales* (1969–70) and *Bizarre Fantasy Tales* (1970–71). Like their predecessors, these two books were padded out with reprints culled from the same sources, making the titles virtually interchangeable. Alas, barely out of the gate and with only a few issues of each to hit the stands, the new titles folded alongside the long running *Magazine of Horror* and *Startling Mystery Stories.*

Although the above periodicals did their best to establish a sound market for short horror fiction, other, less sincere publishers would try their hands at it as well, and often with little if any success. (Ironically, some of the less reputable publications among them are now in the highest demand amongst collectors, due to their extremely lurid offerings and limited print runs.) Like the comic magazines published by Eerie Publishing, some of

these bottom feeders would push the envelope in order to attract the attention of those horror fans with a limited attention span and a penchant for more exploitative material.

A case in point was the gratuitous *Shock Mystery Tales* [Pontiac Publishing] (1961–63). Ostensibly a horror fiction periodical, this short-lived title was actually a throwback to the lurid weird menace pulps of the thirties. *Shock Mystery Tales* was almost indistinguishable from its ancestors until one perused the interior; primarily new material, the stories proved far more graphic than anything printed in the pages of its predecessors.

One of the regular contributors to *Shock Mystery Tales* was Canadian born Stuart Zachary Taylor Wood (1889–1966). With such colorful stories as ‘Bride of the Serpent Demon’ and ‘Satan Claims a Bride’ to his credit, Wood was qualified to write for a magazine that appealed to such prurient interests, having also been published in such testosterone fueled periodicals as *Adventure* (1910–71) and *Ace* [Four Star Publications] (1957–73), the latter of which changed publishers and became an outright girlie magazine until it folded in 1979.

ver art by the illustrious Virgil Finlay for Startling Mystery Stories V1#5 (Summer 1967) Acme Publishing/Health Knowledge, Inc.

Another haunt was Bill Ryder; with sleazy titles like ‘Horror’s Handmaiden’s’ and ‘Portrait of the She-Devil of Lust,’ it should be no surprise that he had previously plied his wares in such sensational crime magazines as *Sure Fire Detective Magazine* (1957–58) and its successor *Off-Beat Detective Stories* (1958–63), both of which displayed the same sadomasochistic imagery.

After all, they do say blondes have more fun. Cover art for Shock Mystery Tales V1#1 (December 1961) Pontiac Publishing Corp.

Such unsung contributors as Jim Arthur (‘Lust of the Undead’ and ‘Soft Virgins of Horror Island’), James Barnett (‘The Dolls of Death’), Art Crockett (‘Temptress from the Black Pit’), James Rosenquest (‘Dreadnight’) boasted similar credentials, having contributed their questionable talents to numerous low rent detective magazines in the late fifties and early sixties as well. (One should keep in mind there were probably far fewer writers working on the magazine than credited; in magazines of every caliber during the sixties and before, it was common for writers to have two or more pieces published in a single magazine, each one accredited differently to give the

illusion a variety of contributors were involved.) The elements of bondage, dominance and outright sadism displayed on both the covers and inside left to the imagination only the more explicit sexual situations that lay just beneath the surface. One could probably assume that these sordid magazines appealed to jaded horror fans, but even more to enthusiasts of the rough and tumble men's adventure fare that had become extremely saleable since the fifties. They had similarities with the more down to earth crime magazines that were growing in popularity, primarily with their focus on violence against women. Like their misogynistic counterparts of the thirties and forties, they could be construed as a response to the strides towards sexual equality, although the aggressiveness of the newer fare was more pronounced if only because lines between fantasy and reality had blurred.

Despite its crossover market, *Shock Mystery Tales* lasted only seven issues; the move up from the digest format to the more marketable full size magazine presentation during the last few issues apparently did not improve sales as the publishers had hoped.

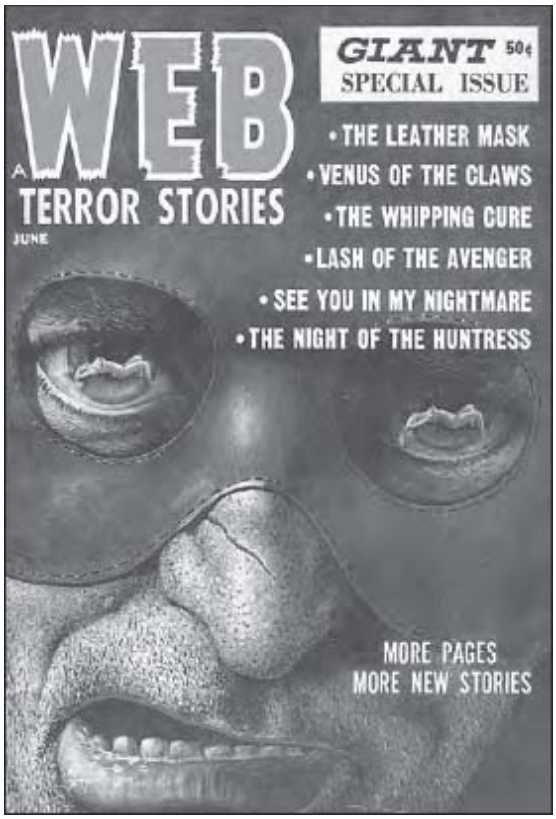
A similarly exploitative and just as elusive publication, *Web Terror Stories* [Candar Publishing] (1962–65), is interesting for its radical evolution. Originally published as *Saturn, The Magazine of Sci fi* in 1957 and edited by the esteemed Donald A Wollheim, it mutated into *Saturn Web Detective Stories* in 1958 after only five issues, probably due to the glut of sci fi titles on the market as well as the growing interest in seedy true crime magazines. The following year, the magazine— now edited by Robert C Sproul—dropped the 'Saturn' from its title entirely, and then in August 1962 substituted 'Detective for the more flexible 'Terror'. Until it ceased publication in June 1965, the eight issues of *Web Terror Stories* that were published were not unlike *Shock Mystery Tales*, with its amalgam of thirties weird menace hijinks and sixties sadomasochistic horror, although there was a much greater focus on supernatural contrivances. Not surprisingly, there was a crossover of many of the same writers between the two books, which may be why many people assume them to be companion magazines even though both were from different publishers.

Aside from the occasional unpublished Robert E Howard story, *Coven 13* [Camelot Publishing] (1969–70)—which had a bent for dark fantasy—eschewed the oft recycled pulp stories for new fiction from the likes of Harlan Ellison and Ron Goulart. Both the painted covers and the interior illustrations were supplied entirely by newcomer William Stout (1949–),

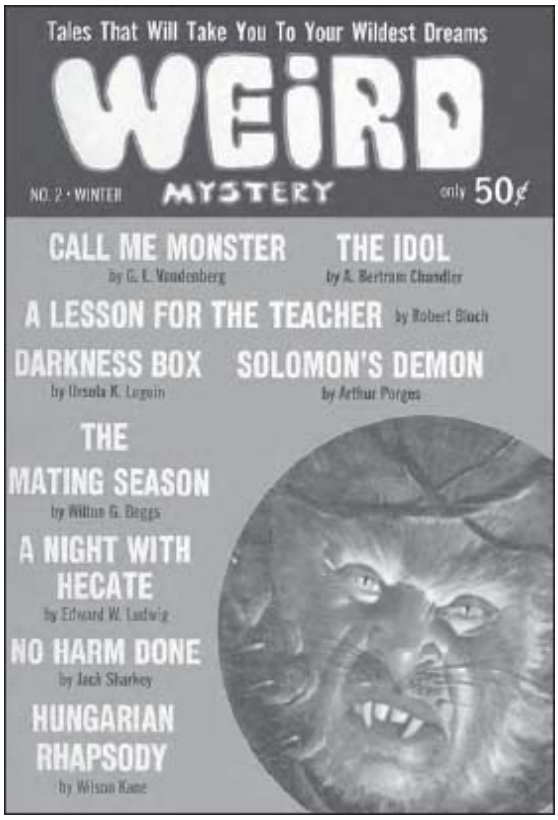
who would later make a name for himself with numerous beautifully illustrated books devoted to his first love, dinosaurs, as well as his work as a production designer in Hollywood.

In 1971, with only four issues to its name, *Coven* 13's subscription list was bought out by Fantasy Publishing Company, the editorship changed, and the title slagged for the more generic *Witchcraft & Sorcery.* With the fifth issue, it also dispensed with the digest format for that of a standard magazine, although it was often printed with a newsprint cover stock for economical reasons. Despite some great contributions—including early work from artists Berni Wrightson and Jeff Jones—it folded after six more issues.

In the early seventies, some attempted to continue the tradition with material of a higher literary content. *The Haunt of Horror* [Marvel Comics Group] (1973)—covered elsewhere in this book—and the resurrected *Weird Tales* [Renown Publications] (1973–74) were two, but neither one had the opportunity to establish or re-establish itself. *Weird Tales'* second attempt at life was a brief respite from the grave, lasting only four issues. (Coincidentally, the last four issues of the original run published from 1953 to 1954 were also in the digest format. When it was resuscitated in 1981 by Kensington Publishing, it was redefined as a slick take on the original, larger pulps, undoubtedly to avoid the curse that befell the first two series. Third time's a charm, as *Weird Tales* is still being published to this day, although it has undergone numerous editor and publisher changes along the way.) *Weird Tales* the second offered a nice balance of new stories and previously published efforts, and introduced to new readers such luminary contributors as Lovecraft, Howard, Bradbury, Finlay, William Hope Hodgson (1877–1918), Abraham Merritt (1884–1943), Clark Ashton Smith (1893–1961) and Frank Belknap Long (1903–94) as well as relative newcomers directly or indirectly influenced by the style of fiction to which *Weird Tales* was seminal.



Whips and chains, anyone? Uncredited cover art for Web Terror Stories V5#2 (June 1965) Candar Publishing Company, Inc.



Weird Tales' brief run in the seventies—which lasted all of four issues—was edited by the late Sam Moskowitz (1920–97), who during his lifetime was considered the foremost expert in the field of sci fi. Around the time he oversaw Renown's short-lived periodical, Moskowitz also edited numerous, very successful, anthologies devoted to short form horror fiction—*Ghostly by Gaslight* (1971) [Pyramid Books] and *Horrors Unknown* (1971) [Berkley Medallion Books] among them—several of which were co-edited with Alden H Norton. Unfortunately, due to the magazine's poor distribution, Moskowitz was forced to abandon what was undoubtedly a dream come true for him both as an editor and fan.

Taking its cues from Acme's #8216;thrifty' approach to publishing, *Weird Mystery* [Ultimate Publishing Company] (1970–71) was another short-lived title that dished up pulp reprints, all excavated from Ziff-Davis Publishing Company's vast archives, mostly culled from *Fantastic* (1952–80) and *Fantastic Adventures* (1939–53). Although it probably didn't have much appeal to those horror fans thirsting for outings with a more modern flavor—lasting only four issues may be an indication of how dated the material had become by the seventies—these stories were accompanied by

the original illustrations that graced them upon their initial publication. Unfortunately, the illustrations did little to make *Weird Mystery* a pleasant visual experience, as the text was tiny, and the contents were crammed in such a way that everything threatened to be pushed off the edge of the page when it didn't actually bleed over.

As the seventies progressed, the growing markets of paperback anthologies and small press magazines filled much of the demand for short horror fiction. A handful of aspiring publishers would continue to try their hand at the format for years to come; although a few have made valiant attempts to produce a digest periodical, newsstand distribution has proved nigh impossible for such small print publications. Having crossed into the world of online publishing, webzines have become the favored means to print and peruse through short horror fiction, accessible to anyone with an internet connection and a few hours to spare. As it pertains to weird fiction, mass market digests have now been relegated to a nostalgic realm shared and lorded over by its precursor, the pulp magazine, but they have yet to gain the recognition that is otherwise afforded their oversized ancestors.

❑ **Horror** digest magazine checklist, see page 296

Cover art for Shriek! V1#1 (May 1965) Acme News Company, Inc.

Here is the first issue of a great new Monster Horror Magazine SHRIEK. Within these pages, you will find terror—the menace of witch, warlock, and flesh eater, the lurking fear of the undead, the horror of man's inhumanity to man.

Excerpt from the editorial of *Shriek!* v1#1 (May 1965) Acme Publishing Company/Health Knowledge, Inc.

MOST OF US grew up reading Warren's *Famous Monsters of Filmland,* and although each issue rarely sated our thirst for all things horror, our limited allowances dictated our inability to buy each and every magazine on the newsstand that touted itself as 'the' monster magazine. Despite the allure of the other garish covers staring back at us, *Famous Monsters* always came first. If there was money left over not spent on comic books, then maybe…

Once the market proved receptive to publisher Jim Warren and editor Forrest J Ackerman's groundbreaking monster magazine, it was inevitable that other struggling publishers would try their hand at the formula. Investigative articles weren't necessary to sell a periodical aimed at young horror fans. Simply fill most of the pages with reproductions of film stills obtained free of charge from studios desperate to promote their low budget creature features, accompanied by some vaguely witty captions pasted on by a bored typesetter, and voila! A hit with the kids. The ones that liked monsters, anyway.

The sixties were rife with pale *Famous Monsters* imitations, but none exhibited the knowledge and sincerity that Forry and his fellow writers displayed. Those that did, produced by serious aficionados, were often too

heady for the younger readers, the cornerstone of monster magazine sales. Also, many publications simply did not have the distribution of Warren's flagship book. Monster magazines were springing out of the woodwork, but would just as quickly disappear.

The innocuously named Acme News Company, Inc. aka Health Knowledge, Inc. had already established itself with weird fiction digests like *Magazine of Horror* and *Startling Mystery Stories,* both of which depended on reprints from pulp magazines, as discussed in the previous chapter. The publisher's primary source of income, however, was from a variety of short-lived girlie magazines they churned out during the sixties *(Mod Chicks, Nifties),* several of which were devoted to sexploitation films *(Raw Flix, Untamed Cinema).*

It was not unheard of for struggling or spurious magazine publishers to run the gamut from all ages fare to skin magazines. (Stanley Publishing, known for such low rent comic horrors as *Chilling Tales of Horror, Ghoul Tales, Shock* and *Stark Terror* had also explored the world of stapled navels with titles like *Rugged* and *Satan* in the late fifties. Even Jim Warren attempted to ride *Playboy's* coattails in 1957 with his own girlie magazine, *After Hours,* which only lasted five issues but got him hauled into court on obscenity charges.)

Uncredited cover art for Shriek! V1#2 (October 1965) Acme News Company, Inc.

The premiere issue of *Shriek!* heralded its arrival with a preface that attempted to set the tone for issues to come. Although the focus was on supernatural cinema, the contents occasionally strayed from the magazine's own mission statement. As for exploiting man's inhumanity to man, *Shriek!* made a valiant attempt to go where its peers dared not to at the time, as we'll see shortly.

It is not surprising that the majority of the films covered in *Shriek!* were produced in the UK; even though it was primarily distributed in the United States by Acme, *Shriek!* was actually designed by the House of Horror in London. (Even if one hadn't read the small type in the indicia, the abundance of Anglo fare, and the fact that many of the reviews included both UK and US release titles was something of a dead giveaway.)

Uncredited cover art for Shriek! V1#3 (Summer 1966) Acme News Company, Inc.

The film reviews were little more than blow by blow accounts of the events, *including* the shock endings. Spoilers aside, those looking for a subjective critique or behind the scenes accounts would find nothing to hold their interest. (No bylines are given for these glorified synopses, which gives one the impression that many of the pieces were probably ghosted by the editor himself.) *Shriek!* did provide some engaging interviews with the likes

of Boris Karloff, Christopher Lee and Vincent Price, but these dialogues had been abandoned by the time the fourth and last issue saw print. The only real articles included an unfinished history of the horror film (although it appeared in the first issue, part two never saw print) and an aimless piece with a similar bent (which closes the last issue, and which actually appears to have been sent to press incomplete).

Advertisement for Shriek Monster Masks, a steal at two dollars each, from Globe Sales.

In the first issue, *Shriek!* ran coverage on a film to be released in the United States as *The House at the End of the World,* although it would bear the title of *The Tomb of Ligeia* for the UK market. In the following issue, the editor claimed that they had been misinformed, and that this longwinded title had instead been 'saved' for a new Boris Karloff movie which was then reviewed in their usual unaffected fashion. This movie, though, was ultimately released as *Die, Monster, Die!* in the States, making one seriously question their credibility. (If Karloff himself hadn't referred to the production as *The House at the End of the World* in his interview, one would have written them off as entirely incompetent.) The magazine did have one thing that set it apart from its competitors. Unlike *Famous Monsters* and the slew of imitations, *Shriek!* would devote several pages of each issue to non genre films that flaunted censors and openly displayed barbaric cruelty or sadism. Presumably, the publishers noticed the growing interest in films of an explicitly violent nature (HG Lewis' cinematic atrocities had already been making waves) and sought to capitalize on the trend.

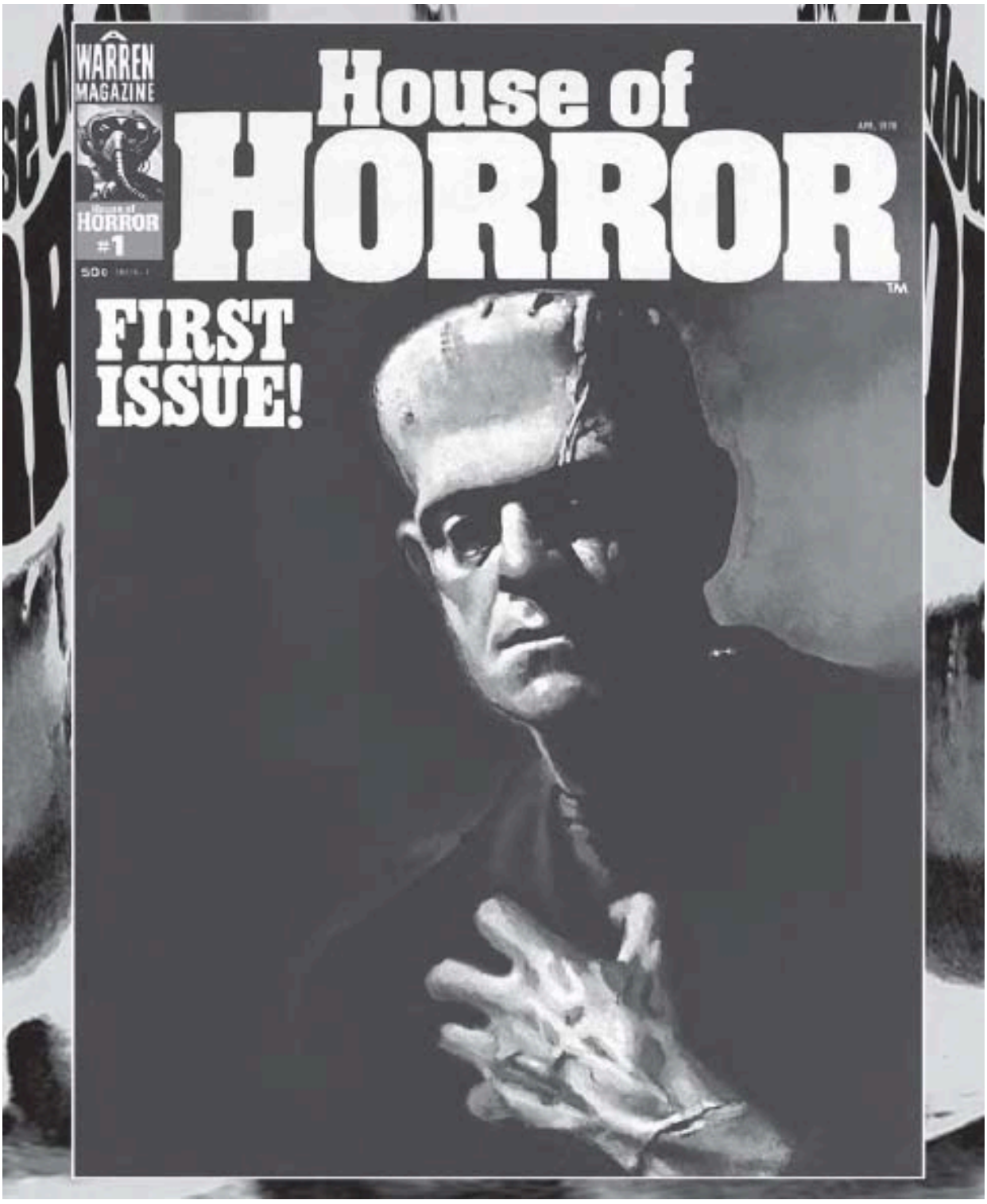
The first issue spotlighted some particularly grisly stills from the POW film *The Secret of Blood Island* (1965) and the Japanese import *Seppuku* (1962) aka *Harakiri,* or belly-slitting, which lived up to the film's title with its gruesome finale. The second issue ran a selection of gruesome scenes from such non horror films as *Lord Jim, She* and *The War Lord* (all 1965). Most of these stills depicted people bound and tortured, and were justified with an introduction that asked, "Is violence really necessary?" The editor then insisted that, after seeing the photos, the readers should judge for themselves if such scenes were gratuitous. Under the subtle headline of "Blood Galore," issue three spotlighted some increasingly bloody scenes from *Genghis Khan* (1965). The last issue shied away from any non horror carnage, but snuck in some brief nudity that undoubtedly concerned a few parents.

In retrospect, one can't help but find the editorial in the fourth and last issue amusing. Penned by one'Frank N Stein,' our host—silent in previous issues—considers the bleak outlook of horror films in 1966. (One wonders if he foresaw the magazine's imminent demise, and sought a scapegoat.) He then blames this decline of monster movies on the rising popularity of spy films and *The Sound of Music,* the defanging of the genre with spoofs like *The Munsters,* and Hammer's abandonment of the genre for epics like *She.*

Considering that the fifties were a low point for supernatural horror fare, that television shows like *The Addams Family* helped create a resurgence of interest in monster mania, and that Hammer's output was primarily horror until the company finally dissolved at the close of the seventies, one questions the editor's grasp of the genre his magazine purported to support. Considering *Shriek!'s* loose definition of horror, in the years it was published there was obviously no shortage of material for them to exploit.

Despite its faults, *Shriek!* is fondly remembered by some fans who grew up in the sixties. (Up until a few years ago when a large batch of uncirculated copies was unearthed, all four issues demanded a premium on the collector's market, in any condition. Today, high grade copies can be had for about twenty dollars apiece.) The exclusive interviews, the assortment of still photos, and even the ads featuring monster toys not available from Warren's mail order outfit Captain Company, make them worth owning. And, despite the devotion to "the horror of man's inhumanity to man," *Shriek!* retains a sense of naivety that could have only been fostered in the sixties.

❑ ***Shriek!* magazine index, see page 297**



Uncredited cover art for House of Horror #1 (April 1978) Warren Publishing Company

IN THE EARLY months of 1978, in the back pages of their various publications, the juggernaut known as Warren Publishing Company announced with very little fanfare the premiere issue of *House of Horror,* purportedly a new quarterly publication that—like its flagship book *Famous Monsters of Filmland*—focused on fantastic cinema. This first issue was made available only through Warren's in-house mail order business, Captain Company; such a promotion was not unlike them, as they had released several other magazines that eschewed newsstands entirely, namely *The Spirit Color Special* in 1975 and *Vampirella Color Special* in 1977. (Due to the limited print runs and availability, these remain some of the most sought after books published by Warren in the seventies.) Some avid readers at the time probably assumed the limited distribution was responsible for *House of Horror* never making it to a second issue, but they would have been wrong: Jim Warren never intended a follow up.

There was never a shortage of publishers trying to compete with *Famous Monsters,* but aside from a few exceptions most of their books died within a few years. Comic book publisher Charlton Publications tried their hand with *Horror Monsters* and *Mad Monsters,* but these interchangeable titles amounted to ten issues published between 1961 and 1965. *The Monster Times* [The Monster Times Publishing Company] (1972–76), an oversized foldout tabloid that was just as quick to cover modern shockers like *Shriek of the Mutilated* as it was Hollywood's golden age horrors, offered a cheap and enjoyable alternative to the more traditional monster magazines of the time. Far more extraordinary is *Castle of Frankenstein* [Gothic Castle Publishing Company] (1962–75), a headier publication with twenty six issues to its credit, which, much like *Famous Monsters,* was revived in recent years.

One *of Famous Monsters'* more fondly remembered peers was not an American publication, but the UK periodical *House of Hammer* [Top Sellers, Ltd], which ran from 1976 through 1984, albeit under a number of variant titles. Wanting to break into the American market, they announced plans to expand their distribution to include the US and change the name of the magazine to the less exclusive *(Hammer's) House of Horror.* With Hammer Studios having lost its foothold with American filmgoers, they felt many of the younger American readers wouldn't pick up on the reference to the senescent production company.

Competition from other American publications was undoubtedly expected, but it is doubtful that Top Sellers had any clue just how bloody a battle it would prove to be, and that their attempts to expand would be singlehandedly cut down by the publisher of rival magazine *Famous Monsters of Filmland, James'Jim'* Warren.

Inarguably, Warren was responsible for some of the most highly regarded and influential horror magazines of the sixties and seventies, both film and comic, and it is impossible to offer a retrospective on either without paying homage. His vision and dedication to showcase the best work on the market clearly demonstrated his passion for the field; this passion, however, was also responsible for his precarious personal and working relationships. Many creators have noted his volatile nature, particularly when it came to the competition, but even those freelance writers and artists working for him were often subjected to his umbrage, especially if their loyalty to the company was at all in question. Although his cutthroat approach to business was at least partially responsible for the quality of his magazines, it made him few friends.

Cover art by Brian Lewis for House of HorrorV1#1 (March 1978) Top Sellers, Ltd.

With the word out that Top Sellers were intending to edge their way into the American marketplace, the publisher of *Famous Monsters* decided to take immediate action. Jim Warren didn't fancy the idea of the competition in the least, and so he decided to make things difficult for the less established publishing house. Before the first issue of Top Sellers' publication reached these shores, Warren had rushed to press a one-off with the same title, thus securing a copyright on it before the London based publisher could make the claim. Warren immediately filed for copyright infringement, and the case was taken to court. While the trial was underway, Top Sellers released the first issue of their magazine aimed at the American market; unbeknownst to readers, it was composed entirely of reprints (including the cover art, which was borrowed from the seventeenth issue of *House of Hammer).*

Cover art by Ramon Sola for House of Horror V2#7/#19 (April 1978) Top Sellers, Ltd.

Still duking it out in court, the next issue of the regular series, number nineteen, bore the new much coveted title as well, and even received some limited distribution within the US. Unfortunately, the courts upheld Warren's claim, so Top Sellers was forced to change the title again, this time to *(Hammer's) Halls of Horror* with issue twenty. Despite the fact that the UK magazine was in many ways superior to Warren's monster movie magazines —particularly in the writing and the depth of its film coverage—there never was a second issue of the US only version, and issue twenty proved to be the last with any overseas distribution at all. Three issues later, the title was cancelled, although it was revived in 1982 by another publisher, Quality Communications, which put out another eight issues before that series issued its last gasp.

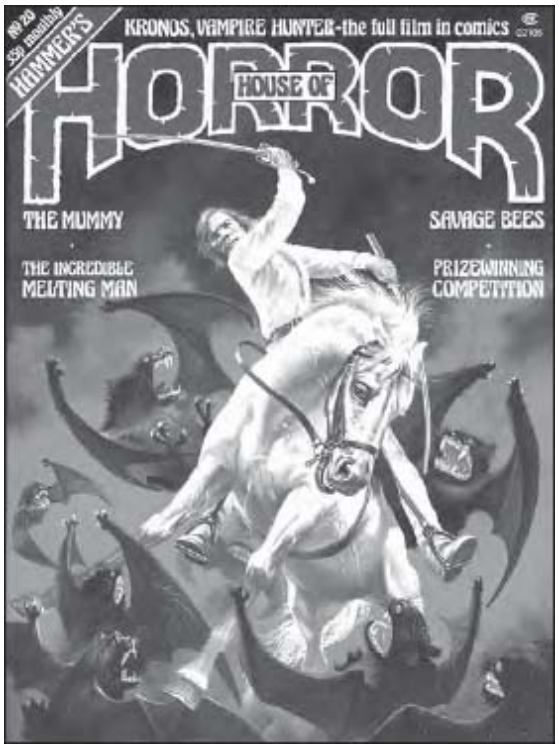
Much like the fabled *Eerie* #1 (Sep 1965), Warren only printed enough copies of *House of Horror* in order to secure the claim—200 to 400 copies, by most accounts. This sober estimate makes it the second rarest Warren publication, beaten only by *Eerie*, for which there were less than 200 copies made. Whereas the first issue of *Eerie* was hastily Xeroxed and only sold through a newsstand inhabiting the same building as the offices of Warren

Publishing Company, this *House of Horror* one-shot boasted top notch production values and was far more accessible to the public.

Those readers who plunked down money for this magazine that could be had for a dollar post paid were no doubt disappointed by what awaited them in the mailbox a month later. Although the quality of the cover and paper stock was better than anything Warren had ever used to print their flagship book, this new title was nothing more than a hurried paste-up of reprints from *Famous Monsters.* Furthermore, the magazine ran only thirty two pages—the same as most comic books at the time—which was a far cry from *Famous Monsters,* whose girth was at least double that. Most disheartening, the 'horror' in the title was a misnomer, as the book spent more time dwelling on sci fi fare than monster movies, in particular *Star Wars* and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind.*

Even if Warren's *House of Horror* had sold well, it is doubtful he would have kept it going. Establishing a second horror film magazine would have only drawn sales away from *Famous Monsters,* which by this time had to offer more focus on films like *Star Wars* to compete in a marketplace that was losing interest in all things horror.

Today, copies of this magazine typically fetch a couple hundred dollars in high grade condition; although rare, it isn't too difficult to track down a copy. Of course, this is easy for me to say as I have seen more copies of this book in one place than most people ever will. In the late eighties, I worked for a local bookstore owner who acquired a large collection of horror magazines through an auction that included no less than fifty copies of this magazine; how the previous owner—having died in a house fire, hence the liquidation of his entire collection—had gotten his hands on so many copies is anybody's guess. Unfortunately, my employer and I sold off most of the copies before the marketplace got wind of their scarcity, so a large chunk of the print run—a fourth to an eighth of it, at the very least—was primarily circulated in western Washington. Alas, neither of us has any copies left.



Cover art by Bill Phillips for House of Horror V2#8/#20 (May 1978) Top Sellers, Ltd.

❑ ***House of Horror*** **content & credits, see page 298**

MONSTER FILMS
SON of FRANKENSTEIN
The GREATEST MONSTER of all time comes to LIFE AGAIN!
CASTLE FILMS
SUPER 8
HE ROLLED THE SEVEN WONDERS OF THE WORLD INTO ONE!
FRANKENSTEIN
CONQUERS THE WORLD
BLACK & WHITE SOUND

Top Excerpt from L'Amante del Vampiro (1960) Ken Films #2217
Above Excerpt from Son of Frankenstein (1939) Castle Films #1033

AS A YOUNG CHILD, before the boom of home video in the seventies, I recall being captivated by the advertisements for 8mm films offered by Captain Company in the back pages of Warren's esteemed publications. 200 foot reels were offered for as little as $9.95 US, and 500 foot reels for upwards of $19.95. Although I had seen most of these films in their entirety on television at one time or another, the thought of being able to actually *own* footage from one of these films, to be watched any time at my convenience, was too good to be true. And it was, as my family didn't even own a film projector, and $9.95 was at *least* three months allowance. I would have thought these films were a pipe dream, had not one of my teachers—knowing my love for monster movies—borrowed a Super 8 copy of Hammer Studios' *The Curse of Frankenstein* and shown it to me and a few friends after school as a treat. A few years later, I had also seen a few of these priceless treasures offered by a local pharmacy that specialized in camera and film equipment, but they were always just out of reach, secured behind glass and bearing price tags that were far too rich for my blood.

NOTE: A portion of the material in this piece was culled from the article'Stags & Smokers: Collecting 8mm & Super 8 Films,' which appeared in Filthy Habitsv1#1 [Stigmata Press; 2002].

Many years later, I managed to acquire a handful of films at a local swap meet where I spent much of my youth—a fifty foot reel of *The*

Creature Walks Among Us among them—but traded them to another collector once the novelty of owning the otherwise ‘useless’ films wore off. I would rue this day when, fifteen years later, I was fighting tooth and nail for the very same pieces on eBay. I had no intention of watching the films I had begun to hoard, though; video made these highly condensed versions completely obsolete as far as entertainment value was concerned.

But then, I couldn’t watch them even if I was willing to risk damaging or wearing out the fragile film stock. I owned two 8mm projectors, leftovers from my days of producing my own Super 8 shorts, but both had essentially given up the ghost a few years previous. (One needed a belt replaced and the other a new lamp, but I had discovered it would be much cheaper to simply replace them entirely than obtain the parts needed to get them working again. The bulb would alone cost around eighty bucks special order, whereas with a little bit of diligent scavenging I could probably get a working unit for about fifteen dollars from a local thrift store or swap meet.) Owning the films as an adult had a completely different meaning than it had almost thirty years ago. Nostalgia aside, they had their own distinct charm in the way of box art, produced specifically for the once widespread format but available nowhere else. The painted art that graced the packaging held just as much allure for me as the covers of vintage monster magazines from the same era, even though they were much smaller and were usually defaced by format and price stickers. And like the magazines, I had to own them all.

But I was not alone in my quest to obtain these dated treasures, nor was I as rabid as many of the collectors scouring the internet for the same; the fact that others were willing to pay ridiculous amounts to build a collection of obsolete 8mm and Super 8 films gave me pause and made me reconsider how badly I wanted them. Talking with other collectors, though, also made me realize just how little most people actually knew about the format and the field in which they delved. Many had never dealt with paper collectibles, and most had never collected celluloid prior to this. Not an expert by any means myself when it came to films, but still more well versed than the people with whom I had dealings, I decided to make it my job to better understand this rarely discussed field.

Excerpt from The Mummy (1932) Castle Films #1021

A Brief History of the Format

THE 8MM format grew from an attempt to condense the 16mm format even further. The first incarnation of this format—the Cine Kodak Eight, introduced in 1932—was essentially modified 16mm film with twice the number of sprocket holes on either side, enabling the filmmaker to expose only one quarter of a frame at a time. Thanks to the dual sprockets, the filmmaker could then reload the film after one side had been exposed and use the remaining half of the stock. After the film was developed, the film stock was cut lengthwise, producing two filmstrips that could then be spliced together.

Due to its economic format, 8mm replaced 16mm as the standard for amateur filmmakers within fifteen years of its introduction. By the fifties, 8mm cameras and projectors (one was rarely sold without the other) became almost as common in households as video cameras are today. In the sixties, there was a push to improve upon the format. This resulted in Super 8mm (often referred to as Super 8), which was introduced in 1965. The improvements were numerous. It used plastic cartridges that eliminated the need for threading the unprocessed film stock or flipping it midway through. The sprocket holes were made smaller so as to allow for a wider image area, about fifty per cent larger than regular 8mm. Other modifications were made that further improved the picture quality as well as reducing the risks of poor exposure.

Since 1965, most films sold to the home consumer were available in either 8mm or Super 8 formats. In some cases, the buyer also had a choice between silent and sound, b&w and color. Of course, the desire for the more expensive sound and color versions eventually won out, making the inferior versions obsolete.

Unfortunately, the accessibility of video cameras for the home consumers in the eighties quickly replaced regular and Super 8 film as the standard for amateur filmmakers. Although Super 8 and—to a much lesser degree—regular 8mm film stock is still available, the dwindling demand forced prices up considerably, relegating the format to the domain of purists.

Storage and Preservation

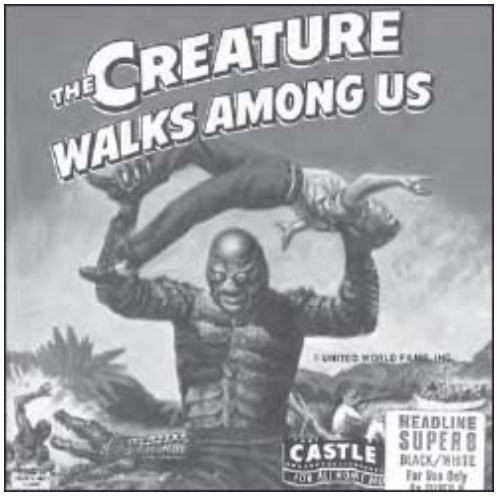
WHEN IT comes to preserving film, most problems can be avoided simply by using common sense. As with any films, keeping them in a cool, dry, dust free environment, and away from the sun or harsh lighting is strongly suggested.

Film consists of a strip of clear plastic, a thin layer of gelatin emulsion, and—depending whether it is color or b&w stock—color dyes or silver nitrate. Depending on its type, film can suffer from one of three degradations. The first, nitrate degradation, is common to films made prior to the introduction of cellulose acetate plastic in the early fifties. This is responsible for the rotting of older films, and for them becoming highly flammable to the point of being unstable. Vinegar syndrome, on the other hand, affects new stock made with cellulose acetate plastic. Symptoms include a pungent smell not unlike vinegar (hence the name), shrinkage, embrittlement and buckling of emulsion. The third is color dye fading, which produces a progressive red or purplish tint, and has become a growing concern for films produced since the fifties. If stored at room temperature, older color film would start showing the effects in only a few years, whereas those stored in a colder climate will last much longer. Additionally, a humid environment accelerates the decay of both nitrate and cellulose acetate plastic. The National Film Preservation Foundation suggests, “a relative humidity of twenty to fifty per cent is best for film storage, with a temperature that is as cool as possible.” Since these degradations are irreversible, one can never start taking care of their films too soon. (For more information, I suggest going to www.filmpreservation.org.) Preserving

the film stock itself is only half the battle, if the film comes with any sort of box art. As with many collectibles, the packaging itself is just as collectible as the contents, sometimes more so if the footage it contains is readily available on another, more accessible format. Most horror films released on 8mm and Super 8 boast colorful packaging, usually sturdy boxes bearing painted artwork culled from the original ad art or, in some cases, artwork not found elsewhere or reworked to a great extent.

Page from 8mm Film Catalog (1960s) Ken Films

Like most other paper collectibles at the time, even those people who kept the box art intact didn't take the necessary care in preserving it properly. Cardboard boxes were almost invariably crushed from being stuffed in boxes that languished in the garage or attic, causing the sides to split, or the printed artwork became scuffed, the rub damage marring the evocative cover art.



Excerpt from The Creature Walks Among Us (1956) Castle Films #1030

The best way to preserve the boxes and avoid damage is to store them on a shelf, on end, as laying them flat in stacks will inevitably cause crushing. Keeping the boxes away from the sun or harsh lighting is just as important to the packaging as it is to the film, as such exposure will cause fading to the artwork. (As far as paper collectibles are concerned, fading or sun spotting on film boxes is, not surprisingly, quite rare, as most of these films were usually not stored in the open.) Since many people tended to store such films in their basements, damage caused by moisture— warping, staining, and even mold—are not uncommon; suffice to say, being paper collectibles, all attempts should be made to keep them as dry as humanly possible.

Price stickers can prove to be a problem as well, but in many cases is easily remedied. Most stickers of this sort can be removed with any one of several adhesive removers, whether it be a name brand product like Goo–Gone or something more tried and true like generic lighter fluid. (I prefer the

latter, as it doesn’t leave the oily residue that many products marketed as adhesive removers do, nor is the odor as affronting as the lemony scent many of them carry.) Due to the glossy covers of many boxes, stickers rarely need much coaxing, although some will prove impossible to remove without damaging the box. Scotch tape, often used to seal the bottom flap, can be removed in a similar fashion.

Although it is a matter of choice, some collectors even remove the generic‘Regular 8’ or’Super 8’ labels which are often applied by the distributors in order to reuse already printed boxes. Usually, these stickers peel off quite easily, even without the aid of lighter fluid. If one collects both formats and is worried about a case of mistaken identity, one can simply remove this sticker carefully and reapply it on an interior flap where it can still be used for identification, but doesn’t detract from the box art.

A Brief Look at the Home Movie

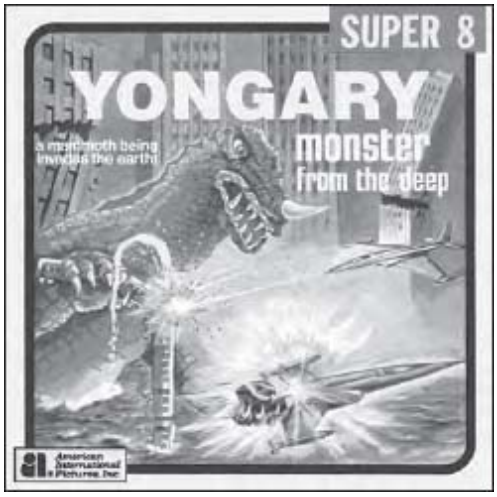
BY THE END of the fifties, films being sold to the home consumer were plentiful, although the market would never pick up any real steam thanks to the growing convenience of television. Even at a couple of bucks for a few minutes worth of film, it was costly entertainment. Although one could fit an entire cartoon onto a single reel, those wanting actual films had to instead settle with an excerpt or collection of highlights from their favorite flicks.

As stated earlier, regular 8mm was standard until 1965, when Super 8mm was introduced. Most films being released by the more established companies were made available in 8mm and Super 8 films, with each format being released in two different versions. The first were the larger, more costly ‘Complete Editions,’ which were 200 foot films that came on five foot reels and ran about fifteen minutes. (Of course, the term ‘complete’ wasn’t misleading when most of the films being released in this format were cartoons and short subjects. The label was later dropped when abridged versions of full length films began dominating the 8mm film market.) The second were the more economical ‘Headline Editions,’ their truncated fifty foot counterparts that came on three inch reels and clocked in at about four minutes.

It is pretty obvious that among film enthusiasts, horror and sci fi fans are the most fervent collectors and aficionados. This wasn’t reflected in the output of 8mm and Super 8 films early on; prior to the horror boom of the

sixties, the 8mm film market was dominated by cartoons, travelogues and newsreels, with an occasional butchered western or comedy offered to the more cinematically inclined. By the end of the sixties, horror and sci fi proved themselves the hottest commodities among home movie aficionados, and have been the most sought after titles since.

The two largest producers of 8mm home movies—Castle Films and Ken Films—were quick to exploit the popularity of these creature features. The releases from these two companies were the best marketed, the most widely distributed 8mm and Super 8 films, and as such are the most commonly found today. With the entirety of the Universal monsters catalog at their disposal, Castle Films were the first to take advantage of the growing interest in horror fare. By the seventies, Ken Films had replaced Castle as the source for horror and sci fi on 8mm, having obtained the rights to genre films produced by American International Pictures, Paramount, Republic Pictures and Warner Brothers. Although Castle would always be known for their quality product, Ken exceeded them in sheer quantity.



Excerpt from Furnakenshutain Tai Chitei Kaijû Baragon (1965) Ken Films #278

During the sixties, fifty foot reels could generally be obtained for about two to three dollars, whereas their 200 foot counterparts sold for about three times that. Captain Company, Warren Publishing's own mail order outfit,

continued to offer films until they went under in 1983, although often with a much inflated price tag.

By the eighties, most anyone who had previously viewed and collected 8mm films had completely converted to videocassette. Not only had this new medium become more affordable, one could also own one's favorite films in their entirety. Many people simply junked their old films and projectors, whereas the more conservational types relegated them to storage. With the popularity of online auction houses, many of the latter have since dug out and dusted off these old relics, surprised that not only can they recoup their losses, but actually make a couple of bucks as well.

Excerpt from The Incredible Melting Man (1977) Ken Films #336

Packaging and Box Art

AS PREVIOUSLY MENTIONED, many of the early 8mm releases were sold in generic packaging, the name crudely stamped on the cover or spine. As the demand for home movies grew in the early sixties, some distributors like Castle and Ken made an effort to package their films in sturdy, colorful two-piece boxes whose eyecatching covers were—and still are—an undeniable draw for fans and collectors alike. Castle's releases boasted some of the most beautiful painted covers, art that was created specifically for their product and not found elsewhere. Ken usually offered no less striking reproductions of one-sheet poster art, typically framed by their trademarked yellow border.

Earlier boxes were usually a snug *5¼"* x *5¼"* for the larger reels, 4" x 4" for the smaller ones, although some companies sold the shorter films in a snug, less deceptive three inch package. By the sixties, most films came in cardboard boxes with printed covers, although a few companies sold their films in generic plastic cases that had a printed sticker or placard glued to its front. (The latter usually suffer from extreme rippling, due to the cheap adhesive used to attach the cover art.) During the seventies, most companies started to shy away from the sturdy boxes, opting instead for flimsy packaging with top and bottom flaps for access. Whereas the two-piece boxes could better survive the rigors of storage, these later boxes were easily crushed, many even suffering damage from the original cellophane that would shrink over time, causing warping and corner damage. The presence of an inner tray—when they boasted such luxuries—did little to deter such wear and tear.

Most 8mm releases originally came with a small booklet or foldout catalog of other available releases. Suffice to say, one rarely finds 8mm films with the original catalogs present.

Market Values

SINCE THERE is currently no price guide for 8mm films, it is often difficult to determine exact market values. Most vintage horror films on 8mm usually bring upwards of ten dollars in nice condition; whether it is fifty or 200 foot seems to make little difference, as long as the box art and film are reasonably high grade. This low end price is usually reserved for those films

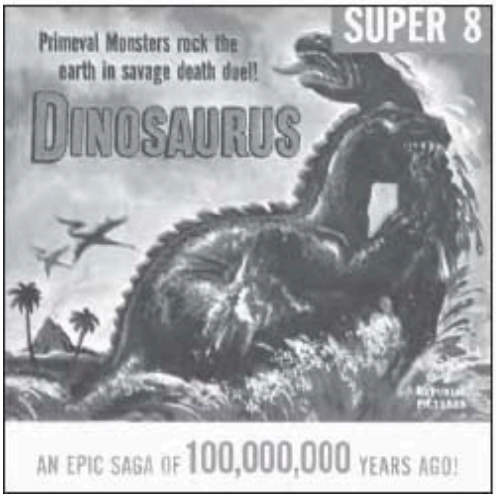
that were kept in print throughout the sixties and seventies, despite the fact many of these are Universal productions released by Castle Films and boast some of the nicest artwork available.

Currently, there is a growing interest in the more obscure titles, those that had smaller print runs during the seventies but were discontinued shortly thereafter when the advent of home video made these clumsy shorts obsolete. Suffice to say, most collectors wish to obtain them solely for the box art, and only view the film if it holds some nostalgic value for them. In short, the films most in demand are those with the most lurid covers and with the smallest print runs.

Excerpt from Squirm (1976) Ken Films #327

Overall, the market was most favorable during the first few years of eBay, when these forgotten treasures were dragged out from obscurity. Since then, prices have leveled out and—in most cases—dropped, as collectors have discovered which titles are scarcer than others. (At any given time, one can find several copies of their favorite Universal Castle release being sold for pennies on the dollar, but may have to scour the site for weeks until they find a copy of a more obscure effort being offered for three times what it originally retailed.) There is also a small demand among serious collectors for original 8mm catalogs. Although the foldouts that came with these films rarely go for much, and are usually considered a bonus if present, the larger booklets that could be obtained by mail back in the day often fetch from five

to ten dollars each, depending on the scarcity, the page count, and the year. (Later catalogs tend to include more horror and sci fi titles, so there is a much greater demand for these.)



Although the format itself has become almost as obsolete as the eight track tape, it looks as if the demand for 8mm films amongst collectors of film memorabilia is here to stay. Online commerce has rekindled the interest, and although prices have stabilized in the last few years, it doesn't look as if these treasures will be relegated to the basement in moldering boxes again anytime soon.

Top left Excerpt from House of Frankenstein (1944) Castle Films #1043

Top right Excerpt from Trog (1970) Ken Films #568

Above left Excerpt from Dinosaurus (1960) Ken Films #SF-2

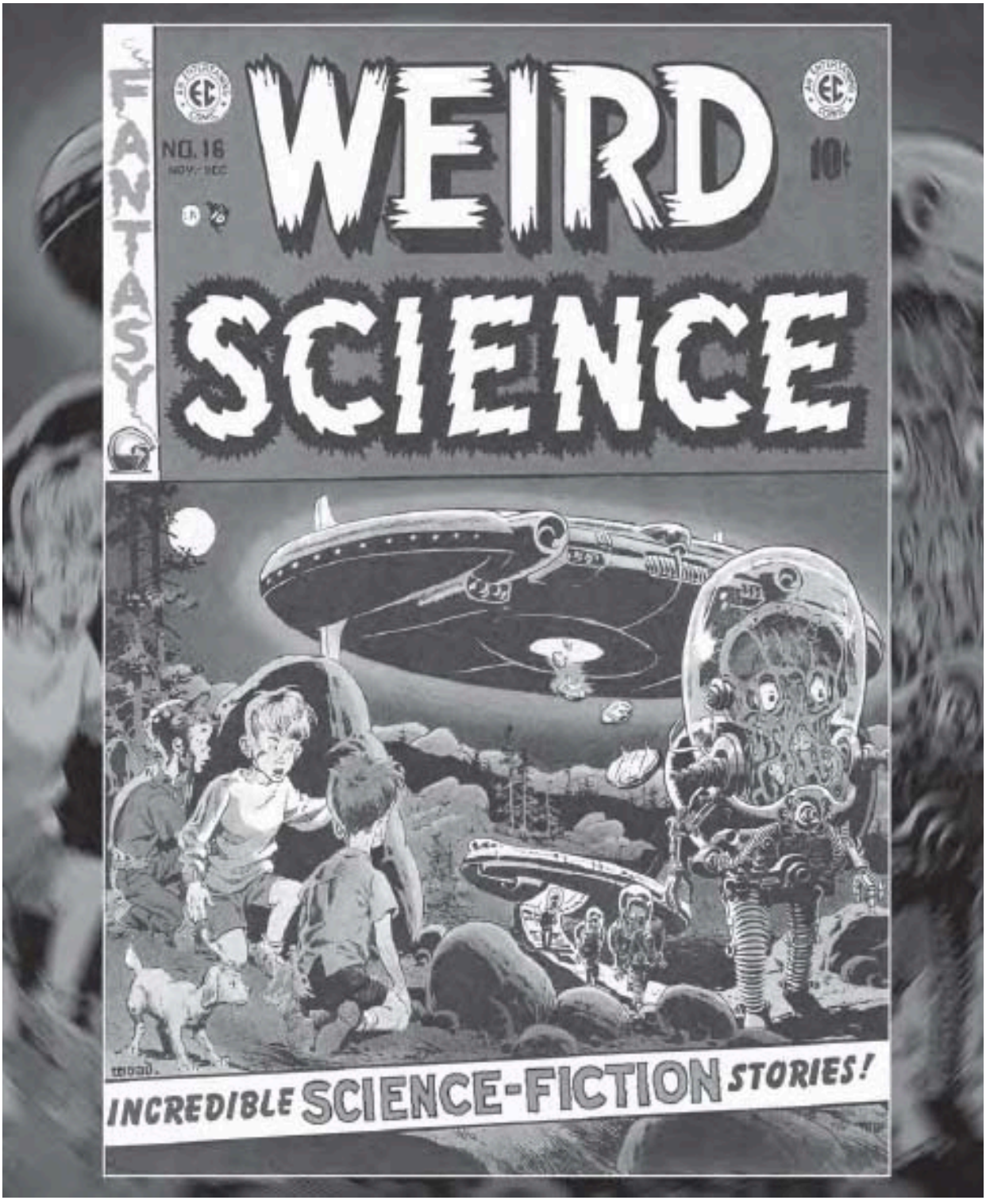
Above right Excerpt from Sora No Daikaijû Radon (1956) Ken Films #229

Top left Excerpt from Night of the Demon **(1957) Columbia Pictures #HF55**

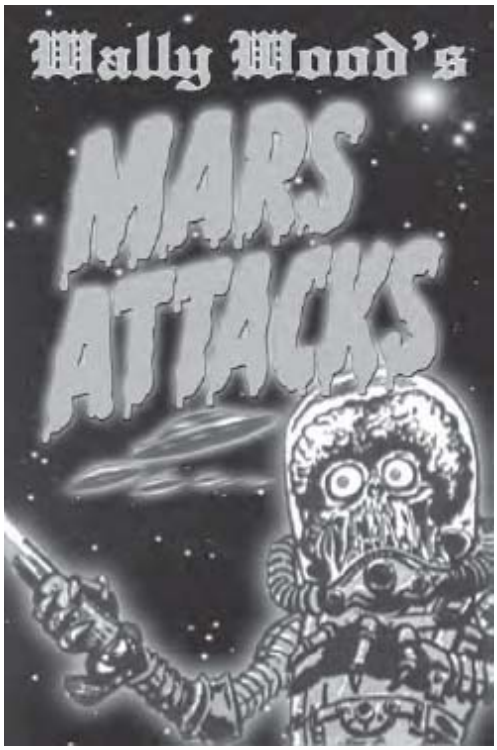
Top right Excerpt from Monster That Challenged the World **(1957) Ken Films #2216**

Above left Excerpt from The Undead **(1957) Ken Films #239**

Above right Excerpt from Behemoth, the Sea Monster **(1959) Ken Films #249**



Cover art by Wally Wood for Weird Science #16 (November/December 1952) EC Comics



The Martian invaders used atomic ray guns as they patrolled the streets of the city. Any unfortunate Earthman in the path of the aliens was easily destroyed. Human flesh and clothing was not able to withstand the heat of radiation from the ray guns. A group of young men banded together in a plot to cut the oxygen lines on the Martians' spacesuits. Creeping up slowly behind them, the youths were poised to strike. Suddenly the spacemen whirled around, as if an inner sense had warned them of their peril. Firing their guns, the invaders quickly wiped out their attackers. The Martians continued on their way, leaving only the charred bones of the brave youths behind them.

From card #19'Burning Flesh'of *Mars Attacks!* (1962) Topps Chewing Gum Company, Inc.

THE LATE Wally Wood is considered a legend in the comic book field, but few people outside this realm would recognize his name or work in spite of his accolades. *Mars Attacks!*, on the other hand, has accrued a cult status that

has worked its way into all the cracks of pop culture. Originally released as penny trading cards in 1962 that were quickly pulled from store shelves, and culminating with a seventy million dollar film produced by Tim Burton in 1996, *Mars Attacks!* has reached a mythic stature in trash culture that is virtually unequaled.

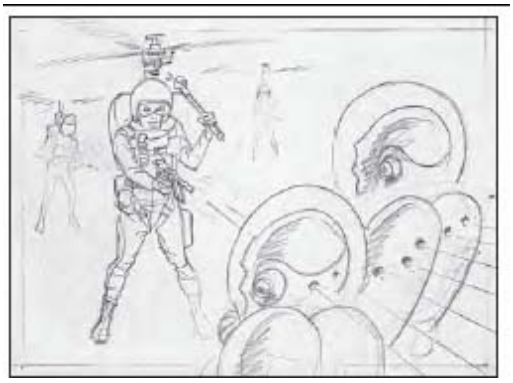
The early sixties were a perfect time for something like *Mars Attacks!* to come into being, even if the older generations weren't ready to accept it with open arms. Sci fi and horror were growing in popularity, as could be seen by the rise in genre films, television programs and paperback novels. The censorship that had squelched comic books in 1954 with the institution of the Comics Code Authority was slowly losing its hold and allowing for more horrific depictions of supernatural and otherworldly bogeymen. The Cold War was coming to a head, rampant paranoia and cultural xenophobia fueling the McCarthyistic us against them attitude. In retrospect, some people may wonder why anyone would consider marketing something as brutal as *Mars Attacks!* at a time when such graphic violence was still unheard of, but taking the tumultuous backdrop into consideration, it's surprising there wasn't more.[1]

The Birth of an Invasion

MARS ATTACKS! was originally conceived by one Len Brown (1941–), then a production assistant and later editor at Topps Chewing Gum Company (1938–), which is even today one of the leading trading card companies in the world. In addition to HG Wells' *War of the Worlds,* Len's primary inspiration was the cover of *Weird Science* #16 (Nov/Dec 1952), published by EC Comics only a year before Dr Fredric Wertham put a kibosh on the comic book industry with his influential treatise, nay diatribe, *Seduction of the Innocent* [Rinehart & Company, Inc.]. The cover of the 'funny book' depicted a gaggle of children being accosted by a group of nightmarish gun toting aliens emerging from a flying saucer, with more ships hovering in the skies above. This scenario gave Mr Brown a perfect springboard for a comic book style apocalypse to be featured on a trading card set.

Retroactive abortion via Martian death ray. Pencil study for Mars Attacks! byWallyWood (1962) From the collection of Gary Hill

Topps had had great success with the controversial *The Civil War News* cards, released the previous year. Inspired by the *Horrors of War* trading cards from the thirties, Topps' cards also dished up graphic depictions of war atrocities to complement their 'educational' intent; unbeknownst to everyone but the creators, the news stories on the back of the cards were entirely fictional, a product of Len's imagination, and included to accommodate the sensational artwork, not vice versa. Despite the consternations of concerned parents, the kids ate up the five for a nickel servings of blood and guts, so Len was confident that combining similarly staged bloodshed with a topic that children would instinctively find more interesting would make for a surefire hit. Len pitched his idea to the head of new product development at Topps, Woody Gelman (1915–78). Gelman started out in the business as an animator for Max Fleisher's studio, who produced such timelessly wholesome cartoons as *Superman* and *Popeye.* (Unlike many people in the business, Gelman was a diehard fan and rabid collector, and is renowned for being one of the first serious collectors of pulp magazines and trading cards.) Woody saw the project's potential, and—drawing on his skills as an artist—hammered out some rough sketches that gave shape to Len's nightmare inducing scenario. But they still needed a professional artist to bring the project to life. It was then that they decided to approach the man who had inspired Len's vision to begin with: the inimitable Wallace Wood.



One-man whirlybirds tip the balance of the war. Pencil study for Mars Attacks! byWallyWood (1962) From the collection of Gary Hill

Ever the professional, and probably flattered that he himself had helped inspire the project with work produced ten years previously, Wood wasted no time in preparing some pencil and even pen and ink studies for the project. Ultimately, they decided not to continue using his talents.

Humans are slaughtered en masse by the Martians. Wash study for Mars Attacks! by Wally Wood (1962) From the collection of Gary Hill It has been rumored that Len and Woody found Wood's depictions of the Martian atrocities far too subdued, and that their need for something harsher, more intense, forced them to look elsewhere. One needs only to see two of Wood's unused sketches to see that this is not the case.

The first, 'Blasted into Oblivion' (originally 'Tied to Rocket Tubes'), depicts men being strapped to the front of Martian cannons. As one hapless

victims screams in torment at the thought of his inevitable fate, the remains of another dangle from a nearby cannon, his torso completely missing, legs still attached by their ankles with rope to the dead man's wrists, his innards swaying over the smoking barrel. The second,'Unspeakable Experiments' (originally'Human Guinea Pigs!'), catches three Martian scientists in the act of performing a live vivisection on a man who appears to have been spared the luxury of anesthesia. A buxom young woman in a bra and tattered skirt watches in horror from a nearby cage, contemplating her own fate. As disturbing as the immolating of live cattle and a boy's dog by the invaders may have been, these two snapshots alone are far gorier and more perturbing than anything that appeared in the original set, which makes one wonder if Wood No shortage of human carnage and mayhem. Wash study for Mars Attacks! by Wally Wood (1962) From the collection of Gary Hill was excused from the project for just the opposite reason: that his work was too damn twisted for even Brown and Gelman.

No shortage of human carnage and mayhem. Wash study for Mars Attacks! by Wally Wood (1962) From the collection of Gary Hill

Other sources have insisted that Wood was tied up with other projects with which he was contractually obligated, which seems more likely than the previous legend but ultimately just as fallacious. In an interview with Len Brown for *Blab Magazine* in 1987, Brown stated that, "As great an artist as [Wood] was… he just didn't seem to lay it out the way we wanted for 'peak drama."' Brown insisted, though, that they stayed true to Wood's original designs of the bloodthirsty aliens themselves, regardless of who rendered the final product.

With Gelman and Wood's sketches in hand, Len and his partner then approached another comic book veteran, SR 'Bob' Powell (born Stanley Pulowski) (1917–67), an artist from Will Eisner's illustrious stable who had worked on everything from *The Spirit Weekly Newspaper Sections* (1940–52) to *Shadow Comics* (1940–49). Powell rendered a series of illustrations that were more to the developer's liking, with "each card look[ing] almost like a pulp magazine cover". One step closer to a finished product, Len and Woody employed the talents of Norman 'Norm' Blaine Saunders (1907–89), a prolific pulp magazine and comic book cover artist with a penchant for the gruesome and macabre, whose painted work had previously graced Topps' grim *The Civil War News.* (Due to time constraints, a handful of paintings were ghosted by anonymous house artists, anywhere from ten to twenty per cent by Brown's recollection.)

Human vivisection as a legitimate past time. Wash study for Mars Attacks! by Wally Wood (1962) From the collection of Gary Hill

Knowing they were pushing both the envelopes of good taste and public morality, the creators hit their first snag with censorship before the cards were even released, when the president of Topps caught sight of their efforts and had them tone down a number of cards. In addition to covering some of the existing leg and cleavage exposure, the artists were forced to put some meat back on the bones of various victims so they weren't nearly as skeletal, which had been curiously frowned upon since the introduction of the Comics Code.

With a full set of fifty five trading cards soon under their belts (reluctantly approved by the president), Topps—still leery of the possible backlash—produced them under the misleading name of Bubbles, Inc. The cards were then released to a test market as *Attack from Space*, which sold for a measly penny per pack. The reception was promising, so they

repackaged their ghastly us-versus-them epic as *Mars Attacks!* (for reasons not so obvious)[2] and upped the retail price to a standard nickel (for reasons quite obvious). It was an instant success with the younger consumers, but it didn't take long for parents to find out exactly what their children were shelling out their allowance for. When hapless people and their pets weren't being incinerated by Martian death rays, they were being gored and devoured by the Martian's minions: unearthly beasts and oversized insects under the invader's control with a hankering for human flesh. Although fairly tame by today's standards on the whole, the climate of the early sixties was still quite conservative.

Martians discover a quick cure for acid indigestion. Wash study for Mars Attacks! by Wally Wood (1962) From the collection of Gary Hill

It is rumored that concerned parents up in arms over *Mars Attacks!* soon had their local stores pulling the offensive trading cards off their shelves and shipping them back en masse. Closer to the truth, the furor caused Topps to halt production on the cards altogether after about five months, making for a rather limited print run and distribution. (With its premature demise, *Mars Attacks!* never made it to some cities and regions.) Much like comic books from the previous decade, many young boys had what cards they were able to secure in the short time they were made available taken from them and properly disposed of with the rest of the trash. Made scarce by these Martian witch hunts, *Mars Attacks!* survived mostly as a memory and by word of mouth among those who had once owned them. For some, they became the stuff of legends; mostly, the cards were quickly forgotten by the general public.

Original Mars Attacks! pen & ink study (1962) From the collection of Gary Hill

Lost in Space, but not Forgotten

FOR THE NEXT eighteen years, the only real mentions of the cards in print were in the pages of sci fi and comic related fanzines. In 1980, Darkstar Marketing released a limited edition portfolio called *Mars Attacks Portfolio of Roughs* that reproduced many of Wally Wood's original sketches, along with some of Powell's illustrations. Containing forty images and limited to 1,200 copies, this portfolio helped to revive some interest in the *Mars Attacks!* phenomenon.

In 1984, Rosem Enterprises produced a limited edition set of thirteen cards that included toned down variations of some the original card set's gorier moments. That same year, Renata Galasso, Inc. made an arrangement with Topps and released a fifty six card set that included reproductions of the original cards in their uncensored glory, with a reproduction of the original wrapper thrown in for good measure.

Card #30 “Trapped!! ” from Mars Attacks! (1962) Topps Chewing Gum Company, Inc.

Fueled by nostalgia and notoriety, in 1988 Pocket Comics produced the first four of a proposed series of fifty-four mini comics devoted to *Mars Attacks!* Each book was devoted to one card (which it reproduced as a b&w centerfold) and fleshed out the story encapsulated by the original cards utilizing newer comic artists and writers. Unfortunately, sales didn’t meet their expectations, and it was cancelled after only four books.

Despite the letdown, the momentum continued. In 1994, Topps released a new *Mars Attacks!* trading card set that included not only reprints of the original fifty five cards, but also eleven additional cards painted by Earl Norem and Herb Trimpe. (Some of these renderings were based on Wood’s original sketches, including those that proved too gory for the original series.) The same year, Topps’ own comic book company began releasing a number of different miniseries devoted to the bloodthirsty Martians and their ingenious and insidious attempts at genocide. (By this time, creator Len Brown was functioning as an editor at Topps, a position he held at least until 1998.) The biggest news came a couple of years later when eccentric Hollywood visionary Tim Burton announced his cinematic adaptation of the outrageous sci fi fable. Opening on Friday the thirteenth during the Christmas season of 1996, and clocking in with a seventy million dollar tab, *Mars Attacks!* the movie was released to mixed reviews. Merchandising quickly flooded the market, and soon there was nary an American consumer who hadn’t heard of *Mars Attacks!* What had once been seemingly doomed to obscurity had become a commonplace name in nearly every American household.

Although he is given his dues posthumously in the credits, Wally Wood is still to this day virtually unknown outside the comic book field, and a nonentity among many younger fans.

Wally Wood: An American Legend

> *Wally may have been our most troubled artist… I’m not suggesting any connection, but he may have been our most brilliant.*

William Gaines remembers Wally,

Mad Art (2002), Watson Guptil

Publications

BORN WALLACE ALLAN WOOD on June 17, 1927, in Menahga, Minnesota, Wally was inspired at an early age by the comic strips that graced the Sunday papers. He had minimal training, which was composed entirely of brief stints at the Minneapolis School of Art and Burne Hogarth's Cartoonists & Illustrators School. He broke into the business as a letterer, inker and background artist for Will Eisner; it was while working under this esteemed tutor that Wood would produce some of his most memorable work, in particular his contributions to *The Spirit Weekly Newspaper Sections*. His most telling work was produced in 1953, when he collaborated with Eisner towards the end of the series' run on a story that featured the popular crime buster in space; it was the sci fi backdrop that seemed to inspire Wood more than the previously mundane settings.

Cover art by Wally Wood for Eerie #5 (February/March 1952) Avon Periodicals

Backtracking, his earliest work as an illustrator appeared in comics such as *Women Outlaws* #4 (Jan 1949) and *My Confessions #7* (Aug 1949) for the Fox Company, with whom he had established himself as a letterer and inker. (In the latter title he penciled such sensational stories as 'I Was Unwanted' and 'Tarnished Reputation,' although these weren't nearly as lurid as some of his later outings.) He quickly moved onto other genres and publishers, producing a voluminous amount of work for such larger companies as ACG, Avon Publishing, and Ziff & Davis, as well as smaller ones like Standard, Trojan and Youthful Magazines. He was no stranger to the horror genre, having produced stories for such pre-Code horror offerings as *Dark Mysteries* (1951–55), *Startling Terror Tales* (1952–54) and *Witchcraft* (1952–53), as well as EC's notorious *The Haunt of Fear* (1950–54), *Shock SuspenStories* (1952–55) and *Tales from the Crypt* (1950–55).

EGYPT! THE GREAT DESERT... BURIAL PLACE OF THE ANCIENT KINGS! THREE ARCHAEOLOGISTS SEEKING KNOWLEDGE OF THE PAST, HAVE JUST MADE AN UNUSUAL DISCOVERY...
THE MUMMY
BUT SIR JOSEPH, WHAT MAKES YOU THINK THAT THIS MAN WAS BURIED ALIVE?
NOTICE HOW THE USUAL SCAR MADE BY THE EMBALMER'S KNIFE ISN'T THERE... THAT, PLUS THE FACT THAT THE SACRED SIGNS HAVE BEEN CHIPPED OFF HIS COFFIN INDICATE THAT THIS MAN, IM-HO-TEP WAS SENTENCED, NOT ONLY IN THIS WORLD, BUT ALSO IN THE NEXT! RIGHT, DR. MULLER?
YES... IN MY OPINION THIS WAS HIS PUNISHMENT FOR SOME GRAVE OFFENSE AGAINST THE PHAROAH!
STORY AND ART BY RUSS JONES AND wallace wood

Opening panel from an illustrated adaptation of "The Mummy" by Russ Jones and Wally Wood. Monster World #1 (November 1964) Warren Publishing

Despite his amazing range, it was the sci fi genre that brought out his best work, and it was within the pages of such watershed comics from EC as *Weird Science* (1950–53), *Weird Science-Fantasy* (1954–55) and *Incredible Scifi* (1955–56) that he was able to stretch his wings and explore his love of the genre. (His penchant for women in tight outfits being accosted by bug eyed monsters set against beautifully rendered alien locales would become something of a trademark.) In light of the Kefauver Senate Hearings and Fredric Wertham's anti-comic brigade that nearly destroyed the market for cutting edge comics with a fantastic bent, Wood was forced to broaden his horizons. He began lending his talents to illustrating children's books and the covers of paperback novels, as well as producing more daily strips and spot illustrations for periodicals. He kept his feet wet in the comics field still, with his solid contributions to EC's only surviving book—the long running satire magazine *Mad*—which helped define the look and feel of the early issues.

Above One of the many Wood/Saunders collaborations for Ugly Stickers (1965)Topps Chewing Gum Company From the collection of Michael von Sacher-Masoch

Right Wally Wood and Norm Saunders secure their "hep" status with Ugly Button #5 (1967) Topps Chewing Gum Company, Inc.

As the comics medium began to slowly recover from the witch hunts of the previous decade, Wood began focusing more on his first love by the early sixties. For Tower Publications, he—along with Len Brown—co-

created the *T.H.U.N.D.E.R Agents* (1965–69), which was resurrected in the eighties and has a following to this day. No longer content with being a stable artist, he freelanced for most of the major companies—Charlton, DC, Gold Key, Marvel, and Warren—as well as supporting the early independent market with his fanzine contributions. In 1966, he produced the prototypical underground comic, *Witzend* (1966–78) and in 1969 he self published *Heroes, Inc.*, an unnumbered comic that was only distributed at Army Post Exchange stores. (A second issue was eventually published in 1976.) In the mid sixties, Wood also collaborated with artist Russ Jones (1942–), who was then higher up at Warren. (As a founding editor, Jones was pivotal in the creation of their two leading comic horror magazines, *Creepy* and *Eerie.)* In 1964, Wood and Jones produced a photo fumetti adaptation of Del Tenney's trash horror film *The Horror of Party Beach*, the first in a short-lived series titled *Famous Films.* The same year, Wood and Jones produced a beautiful comic adaptation of *The Mummy* (1932) for the first issue of *Famous Monsters'* temporary replacement, *Monster World*, which Warren reprinted no less than twice in later years.

As for trading cards, Wood continued doing work for Topps, including the now sought after *Ugly Stickers* (1965), which had been started by Basil Wolverton (1909–78). After producing only twelve cards for the forty four card set, Wolverton quit after a dispute with the company over terms of payment and copyrights. The remaining cards were pencilled by Wood and Saunders, with Saunders doing paintings based on their designs. These cards were re-issued in 1973, then again in 1979 as puffy *Monstkkers.* Also released in 1967 was a series of small rubber figures based (some quite loosely) on the critters featured in the *Ugly Stickers*, which were made available through gum-ball machines. (Although no one knows exactly how

many of these were produced, sightings of at least several dozen different denizens have been reported.)

Wally Wood and Norm Saunders give a classic movie monster a serious makeover. 3–D Monster Posters #1 (1967) Topps Chewing Gum Company, Inc.

Later, Wood also contributed his talents to several other monster related Topps products, one of which was the *Frankenstein (Valentine) Stickers* in 1966. The display box was illustrated by Wood, and it is purported that Wood—along with another EC veteran, Jack Davis—was responsible for the pencil compositions which Saunders used as templates for his forty four

painted illustrations. One only has to flip through the set to realize that Wood had a hand in their production.

Another was their line of *Ugly Buttons* in 1967, which sold for a nickel each. Produced as a set of twenty four pinbacks, half the run was produced by Norm Saunders, the other half designed by Wood. Unfortunately, the final product was farmed out to an uncredited painter, who for the most part did not do justice to Wood's pencils.

Also distributed in 1967 for Topps was a product marketed as 3-D *Monster Posters*, ten of the twelve being designed and penciled by Wood. (These posters were originally created as wraparound paper masks to be marketed as 'Block Heads', but safety concerns forced Topps to reconsider these plans.) Although most of these pieces were over painted by Saunders, Wood's unmistakable style often shines through.

During the seventies, his comic book work took a turn towards racier fare, which eventually led to him churning out sex cartoons for the underground comic and men's magazine markets. He had previously done some risqué work for *(The) Dude* and *Nugget* (both 1956–) during the fifties and sixties, but these racy tidbits were a far cry from what he produced for Al Goldstein's *The National Screw* during the unbridled seventies and other, less than illustrious, skin magazines. (Some of these strips have since been published by Fantagraphics Books for their Eros Comics line.) He continued to do more mainstream work for the likes of Atlas/Seaboard Periodicals and Charlton, but his later work for Warren—whose work had become decidedly adult by this time as well—was much more indicative of the direction his work was taking.

Original bubblegum wrapper for Mars Attacks (1962) Topps Chewing Gum Company, Inc.

Unfortunately, the decline of his output was more than likely the result of his growing alcoholism and drug use, and the serious health issues that resulted. By 1981, he had suffered four strokes and kidney failure. Not wanting to face a future that left him partially blind and dependent on a dialysis machine, the desperate artist chose another out, and died of a self inflicted gunshot wound to the head on November 2, 1981.

An Author's Retrospection

GROWING UP in the seventies, my only real exposure to the work of Wally Wood was his work for Atlas and Charlton, although—as a young comic fan without access to golden age fare—his contributions to Warren left the greatest impression on me, if only because they were something of a shock to my sensibilities. It wasn't until I was later introduced to some of his classic works—through the EC Classic Reprints published by East Coast

Comix Company between 1973 and 1976—that I recognized his importance to the field of sequential art.

As far as I can recall, my introduction to *Mars Attacks!* was in 1981, not through the trading card sets as they were thrust into the marketplace, but through his *original* pencil and ink studies being sold at a Seattle sci fi expo. To put things in perspective for modern collectors familiar with the high price tags his works now fetch, these one of a kind slices of history were priced between ten and twenty five dollars a piece alongside Powell's sketches for the infamous trading cards. Although these prices were far from unreasonable, the dealer—desperate to pay for table costs—went home with at least half the artwork still in his possession.

Two comic dealers, whom I had befriended years before at a local flea market, purchased a handful of these pieces, about nine between them; they would have undoubtedly bought the entire lot, had sales been better for them that weekend at the show. Even though I found some of the images fascinating—especially the more horrific ones—I was not possessed by the pangs of nostalgia that my two older friends shared, and was far more concerned with spending what money I had to my name on available Vaughn Bodé collectibles that were absent from my growing collection. During the last hour of the last day, the two were still hemming and hawing over the plastic binder that held the remaining sketches, each hoping to get the dealer to sell them all at a bulk rate. The seller declined, knowing he had already parted with the other pieces for a pittance, leaving my two friends to regret their decision not to splurge for years to come, but cherishing the few they did manage to acquire.

A few years ago, one of the two dealers was forced to part with his original art in order to replace a dead car. I myself was unable to scrape together the asking price but attempted to do so anyway, the seeds of this article having been firmly planted by the offer. I was frustrated to discover a few weeks later that he had sold them in the interim for almost a *third* of his original price tag to another collector who—unlike me— had a *real* job and who also had the forethought to make him a lower offer on the entire lot. Unbowed in my decision to cover Wood's contribution to *Mars Attacks!* in *Trashfiend*, I contacted both the new owner of these sketches as well as the other dealer, whose original Wood artwork hadn't budged from his cluttered yet impressive collection room in the twenty plus years that had passed.

Eager to show off their prized pieces, both conceded to let me scan the originals and reproduce them here in their uncensored glory. Unfortunately, a disastrous computer crash delayed this book, and by the time I was able to hook up with them in order to borrow the artwork, one of them had dumped his on eBay. Luckily, I was only out two of the nine pieces between them, and thankfully my friend who had originally acquired them in 1981 had in his possession the grisliest, most controversial offerings Wood produced for *Mars Attacks!*

It wasn't until after I had completed most of the work on this piece that I discovered the existence of Darkstar's hard to find *Mars Attacks Portfolio of Roughs*, and pieced together the probability that the publisher was also the dealer looking to unload them at the 1981 expo I attended as a young teen. The one collector—from whom I was unable to borrow the artwork before eBay had claimed it—had tracked down the man responsible for the portfolio in order to verify their authenticity, but I had no luck in getting the dealer turned publisher to respond to my emails for a possible interview.

The gem amongst this original artwork was a finished pen and ink piece that was, more than any other, distinctly Wood. This card depicts a perky young woman caught writhing in the web of a giant spider closing in for the kill, both knee deep in the skeletal remains of its prior meals. Above the crumbling backdrop several Air Force planes rush past, the reader left unaware whether the pilots are privy to the deadly drama below. A beautifully rendered piece of comic art, all but the concept was discarded for Saunders' final product. The card that comes closest to capturing the action —#30, aka 'Trapped!!'—features a more intimate reinterpretation of the attack, with the woman exposing less flesh, the spider more comically grotesque, and the ships that imply a possible rescue nowhere to be found.

With the rougher sketches, it is difficult—if not impossible—to tell which ones were supplied by Wood's otherwise deft hand and which ones by Powell. Some of the ones I've reproduced here may instead be Powell's doing, but the dealer insisted that Wood was responsible for all the pieces purchased by my two friends back in 1981.

Aside from the controversy, *Mars Attacks!* is interesting from a historical perspective in that it marks the death of one trend and the birth of another. By 1962, extraterrestrials and giant insects had lost their foothold as the bogeymen of choice in cinema and comic books, with the return of more traditional monsters in their stead. It also precipitated the interest in more

graphic horror fare that swelled through the sixties and burst open like a ripe boil in the seventies. Although *Mars Attacks!* was easily quashed by the backlash of concerned mothers all across the United States, such attempts to hold back the tide of explicit violence depicted in various ‘artistic’ mediums would lose much of their power in the years to come.

- Wally Wood horror comics & magazine checklist, see page 299
- *Mars Attacks!* trading cards checklist, see page 298

NOTES

1 Remember that Herschell Gordon Lewis' groundbreaking exercise in splatter filmmaking, Blood Feast (1963), was released to an unsuspecting public only a year later. The film proved profitable enough for him to continue churning out a new gore film every year or two until, with the market glutted with ultra violent fare, he retired from filmmaking in 1972.

2 According to Len, the title was changed at the last minute because they "felt that a two word title would have more of an impact than a three word title." Without a doubt, Mars Attacks! is a far punchier moniker, but it's interesting that they made such a change when the product was already a proven seller as Attack from Space. In the business where the motto is "If it ain't broke, don't fix it," this is considered as taking a tremendous risk.

Left Box art for Creepy Creatures: The Mummy Jigsaw Puzzle (1975) H-G Toys, Inc. #455-03 **Right** Puzzle for Creepy Creatures: The Mummy Jigsaw Puzzle (1975) H-G Toys, Inc. #455-03

ALTHOUGH MOVIES, comics and magazines take up a large part of any young horror fan's life, we all had our share of toys and games, novelties and accoutrements with which to indulge our many macabre interests. Here is a modest potpourri of nifty monster related memorabilia from the sixties and seventies in which to browse, some of which you may have had, or coveted having seen advertisements. If this proves to be your introduction, even better.

Creepy Creatures: The Frankenstein Monster jigsaw puzzle (1975)

H-G Toys, Inc. #455-01 [Long Beach, CA, USA]

Box dimensions: 5¾" x 11½" x 2"

Puzzle dimensions: 9½" x 20" (100 pieces)

Creepy Creatures: Count Dracula jigsaw puzzle (1975)

H-G Toys, Inc. #455-02 [Long Beach, CA, USA]

Box dimensions: 5¾" x 11½" x 2"

Puzzle dimensions: 9½" x 20" (100 pieces)

Creepy Creatures: Egyptian Mummy jigsaw puzzle (1975)

H-G Toys, Inc. #455-03 [Long Beach, CA, USA]

Box dimensions: 5¾" x 11½" x 2"

Puzzle dimensions: 9½" x 20" (100 pieces)

Creepy Creatures: Dr Jekyll & Mr Hyde jigsaw puzzle (1975)

H-G Toys, Inc. #458 [Long Beach, CA, USA]

Box dimensions: 8½" x 17" x 2½"

Puzzle dimensions: 14½" x 36" (100 pieces)

I still remember when, at about the age of six, I caught sight of my first two (and for several decades, my only two) Creepy Creatures jigsaw puzzles at local variety store Wigwam. (The store went under some time in the early eighties, although a Seattle Costume & Display now resides in the same location, which I religiously peruse every October to check out the latest supply of Halloween goodies. Somehow fitting, that.) On one of Wigwam's clearance shelves, scattered with remaindered toys, were two puzzles that came in coffin shaped boxes, one for the Mummy and one for Frankenstein's monster. I begged, I pleaded, and eventually I persuaded my mother to buy them for me, probably with the promise of performing extra chores for the following week. She probably thought that she was getting the better end of the deal, because the clearance puzzles amounted to less than a dollar, but I knew who had really come out on top.

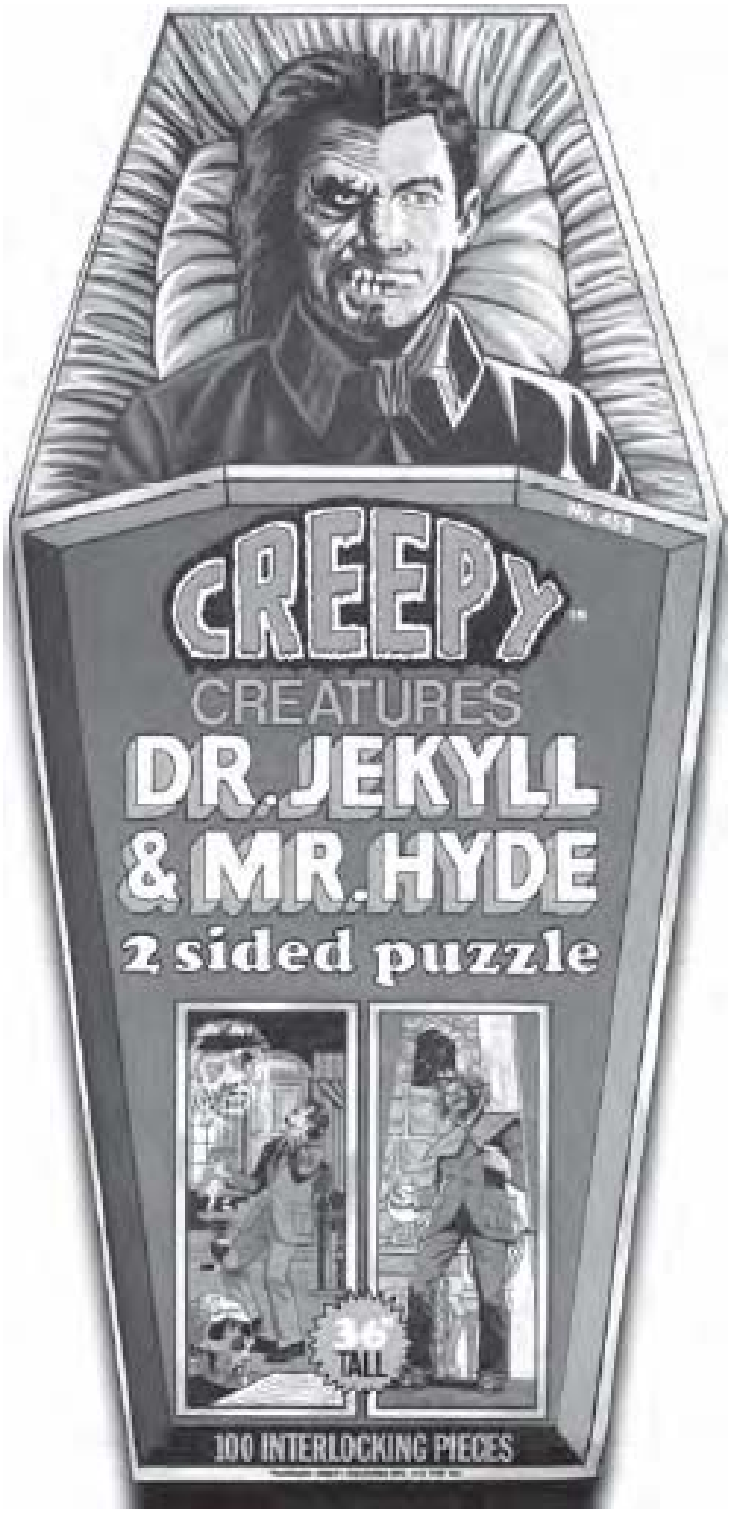
I had numerous monster related jigsaw puzzles as a child, but these were ultimately my favorites. Cool packaging aside—they were *coffins.*… how groovy was that!—the monsters displayed a distinctly seventies flavor, for they steered clear of Universal's copyrighted depictions of the classic monsters. Frankenstein's monster eschewed the flattop look for long flowing hair, and resembled a Haitian zombie more than Boris Karloff. The Mummy boasted a single, buggy, bloodshot eye, and didn't bear much resemblance to Karloff either. Alas, in a fit of temporary insanity during my tumultuous teens, when I had tired of collecting monster fare and dumped most of what I had acquired over the years at the local flea market, the puzzles and I parted ways, the pieces worn and their boxes a little worse for wear.

About twenty years later I found myself trying to get back all the crap I had as a kid without putting myself forever in debt, and stumbled across an advert in a toy collector's journal for three Creepy Creatures jigsaw puzzles. Three? Lo and behold, there also existed one of Count Dracula. Although unimpressed by H-G Toys' interpretation—being a rather sad cross between Lugosi and Lee's portrayals—I was ecstatic at the opportunity to own not only the two puzzles I had as a child but also one in the series on which I had never laid eyes. Long story short, I ordered them for an exorbitant amount, and discovered that the dealer was either a shyster or a complete idiot, as the "Near Mint" puzzles were not only missing pieces, it appeared that the boxes had once been used as chew toys by the family pet. I immediately mailed them back and insisted on a full refund, and soon found myself dodging

epithets from the seller for the audacity of calling him out. And that was the last I saw of these puzzles until I discovered eBay a few years later.

Awaiting me on the world's online marketplace was yet another surprise: *a fourth* Creepy Creatures jigsaw puzzle. This time out, Jekyll & Hyde got the honors. Even more surprising, it was a double sided puzzle that was *twice* as large as the other three. Within a few months, I had secured all four puzzles between three different sellers. (Although in one case, I managed to get scammed on the Frankenstein puzzle a second time, without the consolation of a refund.) Since then, I have kept my eyes peeled for any others in the series that might exist, but I have only come up with multiples of the four I own. Curiously, the Werewolf—whom I thought would have taken precedent over King Tut and RL Stevenson's poster child for bipolar disorder—is absent from the lineup.

The art on the front and back of each box differ, with the back depicting the completed puzzle itself, sans cut lines. Unfortunately, the artists for the puzzles are not credited, but from the dissimilar styles one can assume that at least two different artists were responsible, if not more. (If this was a job given to house artists, each piece of art could also be a collaborative effort to varying degrees.)



Box art for Creepy Creatures: Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde Jigsaw Puzzle (1975)
H-G Toys, Inc. #458

Although the Creepy Creatures puzzles have become increasingly hard to find, H-G Toys was not a small toy manufacturer by any means. During the seventies, they produced a great many jigsaw puzzles, including ones for such popular television shows as *Godzilla*, *Planet of the Apes*, *Shogun Warriors*, *Space: 1999*, *Star Trek*, and a slew of other, non genre programs. So, the chances that there are any more in this set is infinitesi-mally small, although I would love to be proven wrong.

Left Box art for Creepy Creatures: The Frankenstein Monster Jigsaw Puzzle (1975) H-GToys, Inc. #455-01

Right Puzzle for Creepy Creatures: The Frankenstein Monster Jigsaw Puzzle (1975) H-GToys, Inc. #455-01

I have yet to see anything written about these puzzles, or even inclusions in any toy or monster collector's guides. I don't recall seeing any adverts for them in magazines, so they probably had a fairly limited release that didn't warrant a big push outside of modest floor displays in retail outlets. Curious though is the date they were issued. All the puzzles are marked 1974 on the lower edge of the back of the box, but 1975 on the lower flap, with the exception of Dr Jekyll & Mr Hyde, which is only marked 1975. Copies of these puzzles in mid to high grade condition routinely sell for ten to twenty dollars on eBay, although I've seen some online dealers try to get as much as fifty for lesser copies, so buyer beware. Although the smaller size puzzles are a little easier to find, there doesn't seem to be any more of a demand for the larger one, which may have something to do with the popularity of the subjects. Because of the boxes' unique but flimsy construction, they are easily crushed and the flaps often creased and torn, but ultimately they are worth owning in whatever shape one can find them in.

Monsters, Ghouls & Assorted Creeps Stationery Pad (1965)

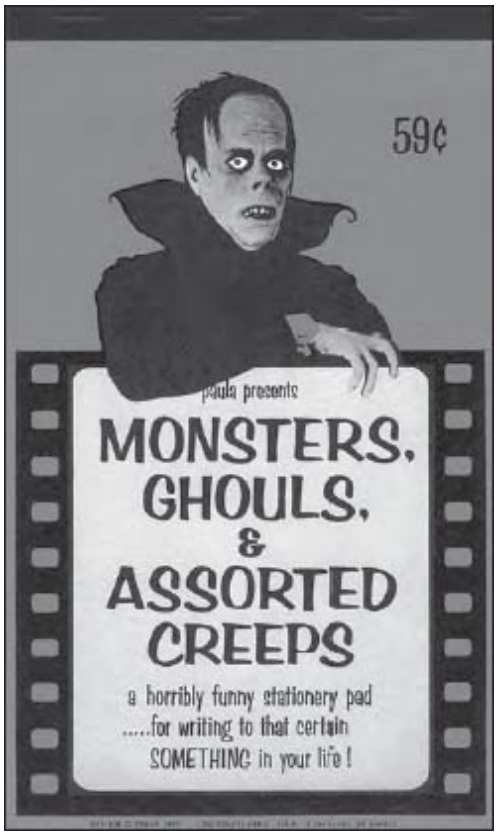
Paula #ASP-108 [Cincinnati, OH, USA] 59¢

Notepad dimensions: 5½" x 9¼" (24 sheets)

This odd little piece I recently discovered while rummaging through the disheveled stock of a local used magazine store, having never seen one before or since. (Alas, I have no trips down memory lane to share about this piece… much to the reader's chagrin, I'm sure.) Keeping true to the popularity of *monstres drôles* in the mid sixties, this notepad includes twenty four sheets displaying twelve different headers or borders that feature various ghouls accompanied by humorous one-liners. Most of the illustrations are retouched b&w photographs presented in two tone color.

Unfortunately, the pad I acquired is missing seven sheets, and one of the sheets bears an undelivered note to a teacher about Bobby's tardy homework due to his inability to comprehend the material. Worse, of the remaining sheets, both copies of one particular design are missing, so I only know what eleven of the twelve designs look like. Oh, well, it only cost me a dollar… which is funny in that I paid forty one cents above the suggested retail price for an incomplete, used pad of paper. Collectors are funny people, indeed.

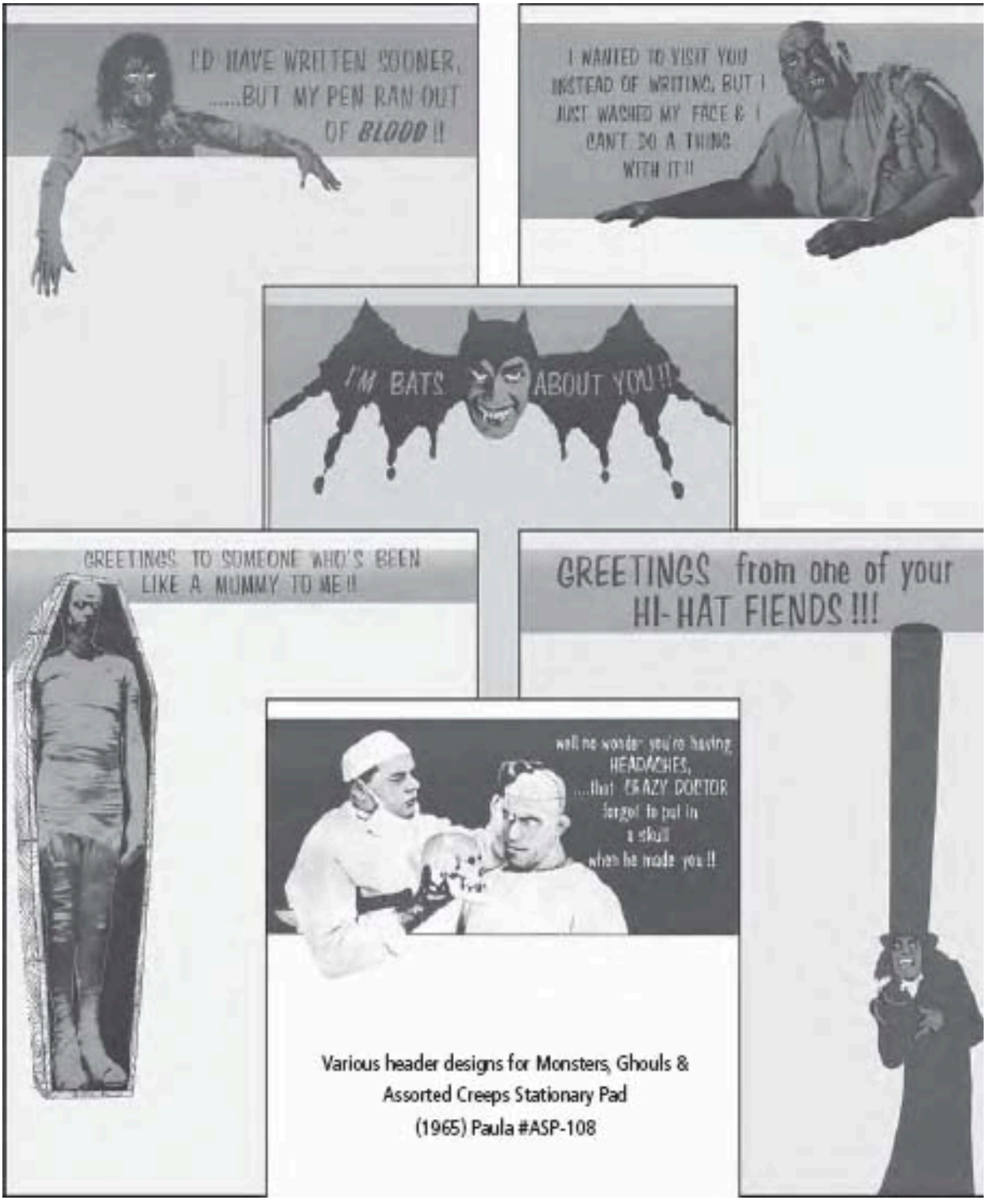
After numerous online searches, I have failed to find an upgrade, and have been unable to track down any information concerning the production company, which simply went by the name of Paula. Furthermore, the sheets themselves bear a copyright date of 1964, whereas the cover states 1965. The suggested retail price of fifty nine cents seems to me a bit pricey for the mid sixties, so it is quite possible that Paula was a fairly small outfit. But, even if this had extensive distribution, it remains one of the most ephemeral or disposable pieces in my collection, so chances of me locating a high grade replacement any time soon is a classic case of wishful thinking.



Cover art for Monsters, Ghouls & Assorted Creeps Stationary Pad (1965)
Paula #ASP-108

Famous Monsters buttons (1963)
Elwar, Ltd #9143 [New York, NY, USA]
Pinback dimensions: *1”* x *1”* (6 pieces)

Label dimensions: 4” x 4¾”


I'D HAVE WRITTEN SOONER,
.....BUT MY PEN RAN OUT
OF BLOOD !!
I WANTED TO VISIT YOU
INSTEAD OF WRITING, BUT I
JUST WASHED MY FACE & I
CAN'T DO A THING
WITH IT !!
I'M BATS ABOUT YOU !!
GREETINGS TO SOMEONE WHO'S BEEN
LIKE A MUMMY TO ME !!
GREETINGS from one of your
HI-HAT FIENDS !!!
well no wonder you're having
HEADACHES,
.....that CRAZY DOCTOR
forgot to put in
a skull
when he made you !!

Various header designs for Monsters, Ghouls &
Assorted Creeps Stationary Pad
(1965) Paula #ASP-108

What self respecting Universal Monster fan could resist such groovy pinbacks? Originally sold through—you guessed right—the Captain Company adverts in the back pages of *Famous Monsters of Filmland,* these metal buttons could also be obtained from gumball style vending machines. Each bears a desaturated painted image of Universal's more popular monsters against a red or yellow backdrop, namely Lon Chaney's The Phantom (of the Opera), Lon Chaney Jr's The Mummy and Wolfman, Bela Lugosi's Dracula, Glenn Strange's Frankenstein (Monster), and The Creature (from the Black Lagoon).

I have yet to determine who was responsible for the painted artwork that appears on these pinbacks. It doesn't appear to be the handiwork of either Basil Gogos or Robert Nuetzell, who were the two primary cover artists for *Famous Monsters of Filmland* prior to the release of these pinbacks. In fact, the only Warren cover image that actually bears a resemblance to one of the pinbacks is the painting of The Phantom of the Opera displayed on issue #102, which is credited to publisher Jim Warren. Although close, it is not an exact match, so both paintings may instead have been based on the same photographic source.

Also available through Captain Company were their three inch full color counterparts, which are superior to the two tone half size cards, and far more difficult to come by due to their limited distribution. (I've included a reproduction of the only one of these I currently own for comparison.) The one inch pinbacks often go for about five to ten dollars, and full sets are not as uncommon as one might think. The three inch pinbacks often sell for upwards of ten dollars, and full sets rarely show up. Be wary, though; as with many of these older, more collectible pinbacks, there is no shortage of bootlegs making the rounds, and many are difficult to distinguish from the originals unless side by side comparisons are made. (Since the originals are bound to have tarnishing to some degree, be leery of any that have unblemished and highly reflective backs and pins.) In addition to the pinbacks themselves, there was also a full color label used to dress vending machines. Although originals are nigh impossible to find, unauthorized reproductions have been circulating on and off eBay for some time now, and can be had fairly cheap. (If the seller doesn't gouge you for shipping, which is often the case.)

Monster Gallery Color & Story Book (1973)

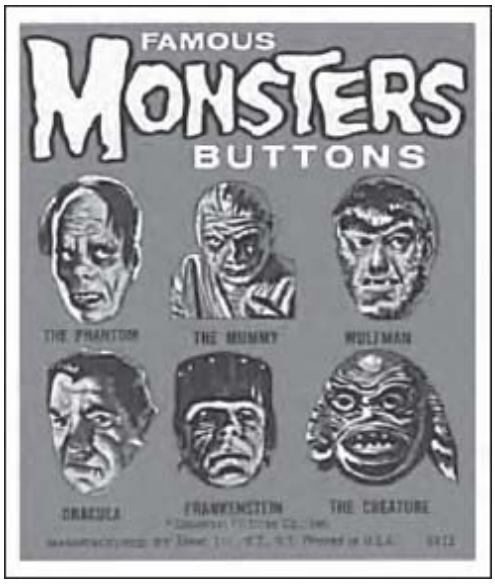
Troubador Press #2013 [San Francisco, CA, USA]
Book dimensions: 9¾” x 12½” (32 pages)
Illustrated by Mark Savee
Text by Leah Waskey

Full set of Famous Monsters Buttons (1963) Elwar, Ltd. #9143

From the collection of Michael von Sacher-Masoch

As a gift, I was given a copy of this oversized coloring book for my fifth birthday, from whom, I cannot recall. Instead of permanently marring the images with my Crayolas, though, I spent many hours honing my burgeoning drawing skills by recreating the likenesses of my favorite late night beasties documented within its pages.

Monster Gallery features ingratiating line drawings of fifteen different monsters from film, fiction and folklore: the Fly, the Monster of Frankenstein, the Mummy, the Creature from the Black Lagoon, the Hunchback of Notre Dame, Godzilla, a Cyclops, a Werewolf, the Abominable Snowman, Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, the Phantom of the Opera, a Morlock, a Vampire, King Kong, and the Bride of Frankenstein. (Many of the names are generalizations, whilst some of the depictions are quite specific, as with the vampire that is unmistakably Bela Lugosi's portrayal of Dracula, although the artist saw fit to give him fangs.) Each 8½" x 1" illustration is accompanied by a full page description of the subject; surprisingly, the wording is not as patronizing as one might expect from a publication ostensibly aimed at children, and the information well researched.



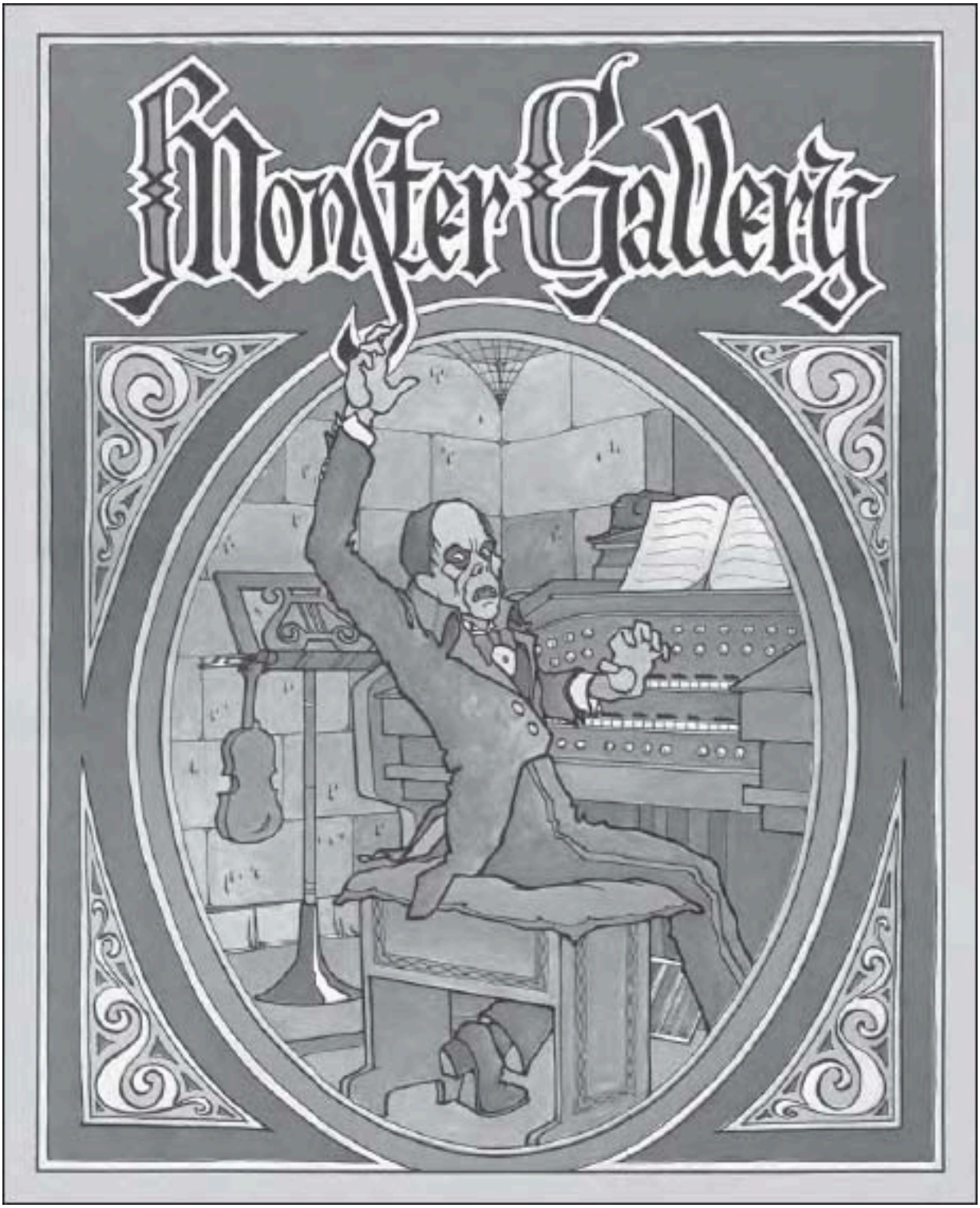
Above left The Phantom Pinback (circa 1960s) E**I** war, Ltd.

Above right Dracula Pinback (circa 1960s) EI war, Ltd.

Right Vending machine label for Famous Monsters Buttons (1963) Elwar, Ltd. #9143

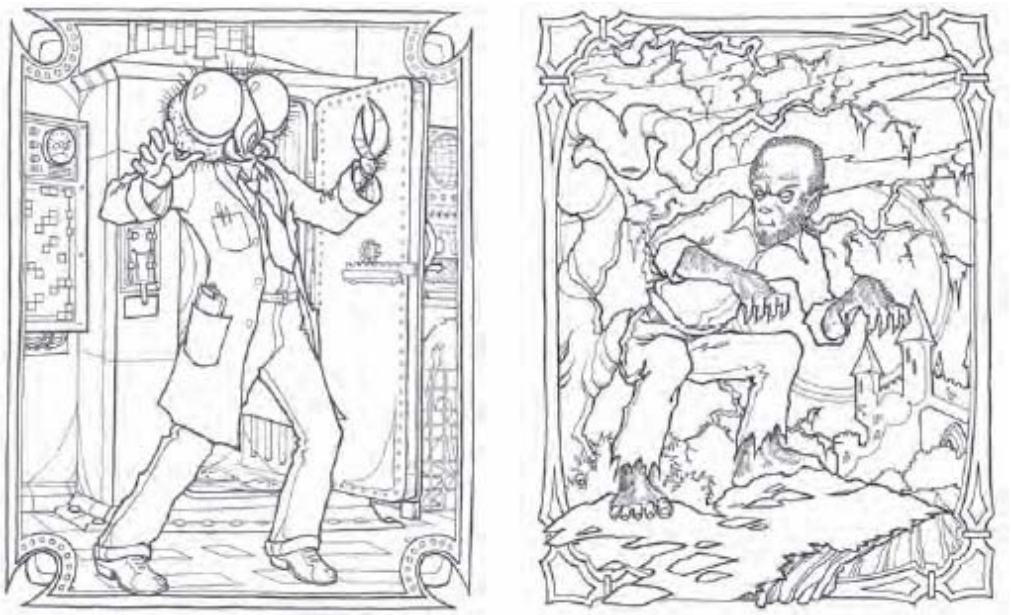
Opposite page Cover art for Monster Gallery Color & Story Book (1973) Troubador Press #2013

A year after this was published, the artist for *Monster Gallery,* Mark Savee, produced a similar book for Troubador Press called *Sci fi Anthology,* which also featured a handful of movie monsters. Most of the material, though, was instead culled from classic sci fi and fantasy literature, but entries featuring the manimals from *The Island of Dr Moreau* or the Martian death machines from *The War of the Worlds* should make it appealing to most horror fans.



Although it was founded in 1958 by Malcolm Whyte and Brayton Harris as a forum for beat literature (often in association with City Light Books), Troubador Press specialized in children's fare—primarily activity

books—by the seventies. (Being a lifelong aficionado of mazes, I once had a score of such books that were also published by them.) Some of the more notable Troubador titles for collectors of vintage kiddie monster fare include *Monster Movie Book* (1974) by John *(Nightmare in Blood)* Stanley, and 3-*Dimensional Monster Mazes* (1976) and *How to Draw Monsters* (1977), both by Larry Evans.



Above left & right Illustrations by Mark Savee from Monster Gallery Color & Story Book (1973)TroubadorPress#2013

At the time of this writing, copies *of Monster Gallery* sell from thirty to seventy dollars in very good condition through places like ABE and Amazon, although—realistically—low to mid grade copies can be found for about twenty or less if one isn't impatient. Because of their unwieldy size and the fact they were often manhandled by their underage audience, these coloring books are difficult to find in high grade condition.

Voodoo Doll Game (1967)

Schaper Manufacturing Company, Inc. #415

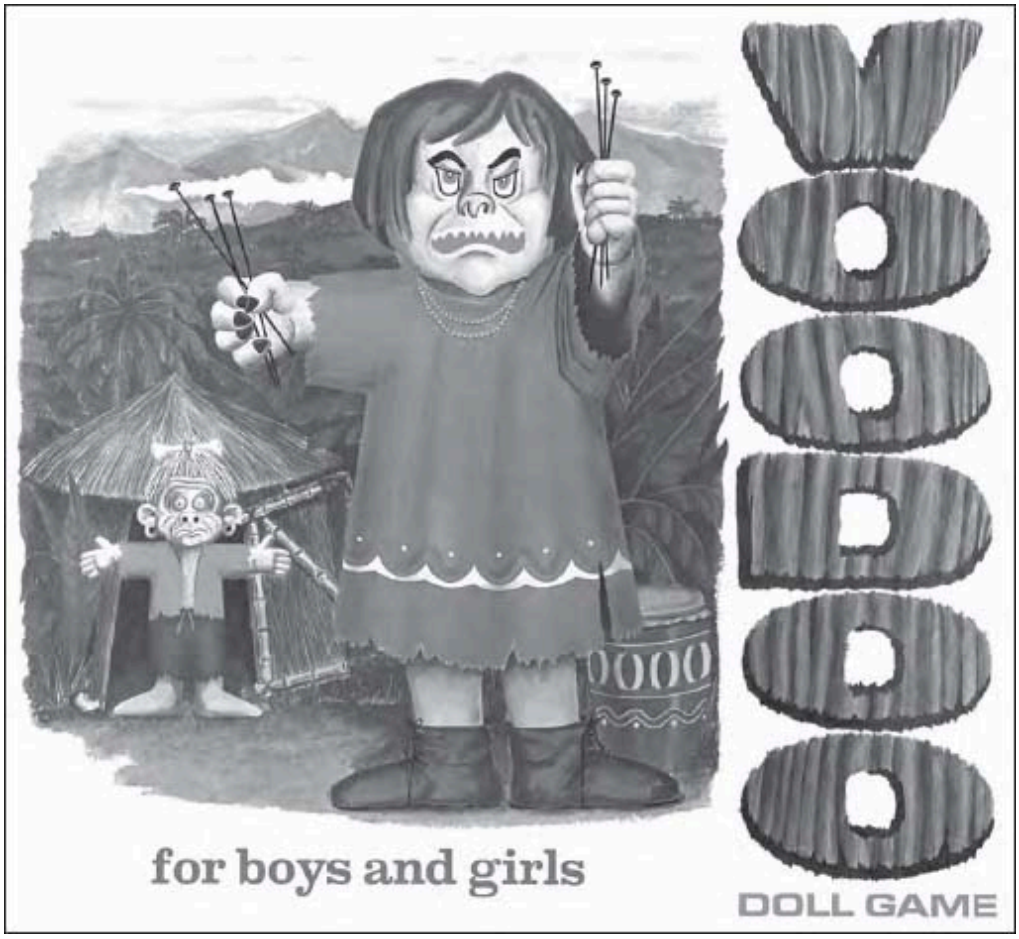
[Minneapolis, MN, USA]

Package dimensions: 13" x 12" x 5½"

Board dimensions: 12½" x 11½" x 5"

“The Mysterious Voodoo Doll Holds the Key that Keeps the Witch Doctor from Leaping Free!” The creators of Cootie were responsible for this charming yet short-lived game of luck. (The luck being how fortunate you are to be pitted against someone too braindead to realize that cheating is a cinch.) The game consists of an elevated plastic board that displays a grotesque voodoo doll riddled with pinholes, and a three inch high plastic hut that holds the witch doctor, who resembles a troll doll going through Paxil withdrawal. Concealed beneath the board is a series of plastic gears held in place with rubber bands. As stated on the interior of the box lid, the game is played thus:

> *BEFORE STARTING THE GAME, push the WITCH DOCTOR, holding its base, into the hut and close the door. Each player then takes one of the small metal pegs and, hiding it from the other players with his other hand, drops it into one of the holes in the VooDoo doll.*



Box art for Voodoo Doll Game (1967) Schaper Manufacturing Company, Inc. #415

> *One player is chosen to start the game. The players, in clockwise rotation, take turns sticking the plastic pins, one per turn, into the VooDoo doll. The pin on each turn is left in the doll. Whenever a player sticks his plastic pin into a hole containing one of the hidden metal pins, the WITCH DOCTOR will rush out of the hut. The player is eliminated from the game.*
>
> *The WITCHDOCTOR is then pushed back into the hut and the remaining players continue the game in the same manner until all but one player is eliminated. That player is the winner.*

Wow. The Voodoo Doll Game takes no skill and relies entirely on a gimmick, albeit a rather nifty gimmick. (If one is attentive, they can easily

tell which holes contain the small metal rods, and avoid them indefinitely.) It is doubtful this game stayed in print very long, although going by several photos I found online it appears that there were at least two pressings. The boxes were identical, but the boards differed greatly: the voodoo doll's hair, boots, and patches had been painted black; both trays were accompanied by a ¼" x 2" groove, and both were delineated for 'Plastic Pins,' not just one as mine did; and the witch doctor appeared to be holding in his right hand something that looked suspiciously like a claw hammer. Since my edition displays all the earmarks of downsizing, it's safe to assume that it was a later edition.

In spite of the fact it was revived at least once, this game is not all that easy to find. But on the occasion one surfaces through an online auction house, it routinely sells for as little as ten to twenty dollars. In person, I have only seen a couple of these games, spread out over a twenty year period; the Voodoo Doll Game is not something I would have forgotten had I laid eyes on it as a kid.

Dracula Teeth (1975)

Franco-American Novelty Company [NY, USA]

Package dimensions: 5¼" x 6¼" x 1"

Monster Fangs (1975)

Franco-American Novelty Company [NY, USA]

Package dimensions: 5¼" x 6¼" x 1"

Monster Fink Rings (circa 1960s)

Henal Novelties & Premium Company [Brooklyn, NY, USA]

Card dimensions: *5"* x 6¾"

Ring dimensions: *¾"* X *1"* X 1¼"

Monster Head Rings (circa 1960s)

Henal Novelties & Premium Company [Brooklyn, NY, USA]

Card dimensions: 4½" X 6¼"

Ring dimensions: ¾" X 1" X 1¼"

Scary Nails (circa 1970s)

Production company unknown [China]

Package dimensions: 4" x *7"* x *½"*

Spook Specs (circa 1960s)

Ben Cooper, Inc. [Brooklyn, NY, USA]

Package dimensions: *7”* x 10” x 10½”

Even as a child, I hated the plastic vampire teeth sold in the weeks preceding Halloween, but usually plunked down a quarter for them anyway because they were the only game in town. (Remember: this was in the twilight years before customized acrylic fang kits were made available to the general public. And, yes, I own a pair of those as well.) The Monster Fangs —as dubbed by the marketers at Franco-American—were typical of the tacky and highly uncomfortable contraptions to which many holiday minded children and adults were subjected every Halloween. (Note the odd number of teeth between both sets of exaggerated canines; even as a kid, this anatomical faux pas irked me no end.) Plastic teeth of this type are still made available today, but are quickly becoming obsolete… not a surprise when superior acrylic caps can be had for only ten bucks. Twenty, if you insist on something a tad more professional.

Worse yet were the likes of Franco’s Dracula Teeth. Not only were the cuspids painfully long in the tooth and the gaps between the teeth unsigthly (neither in a good way), someone in production design thought it a keen idea to improve upon the design by turning one of the lateral incisors into a whistle. Yes, a whistle. (The fact that the number of teeth is even does not make up for this transgression in the least.) Even though one must display a certain level of tolerance in order to fully appreciate pre-adolescent monster fare (hey, it’s part of their charm), this is just plain tacky. No self respecting horror fan—regardless of age or IQ—would be caught dead sporting a pair of these. Owning an unopened package, sure, but *wearing* them? Not on your life.

Although Franco’s products are dated, it is often difficult to tell when they were actually made, since the company has (to this day, I might add) a commendable habit of recycling both the molds and the artwork for years. The only indication that one of the two Franco-American novelties shown here is probably a re-issue is the barcode; although scanned UPCs [Unique Product Codes] were first introduced in 1973, they didn’t become commonplace with non grocery items until the latter part of the decade. Truth be told, they still issue novelties whose packages bear artwork produced more than thirty years ago. God bless them.

Next up are two sets of monster rings from the sixties, both produced by Henal Novelties. The first, Monster Fink Rings, were marketed in a way

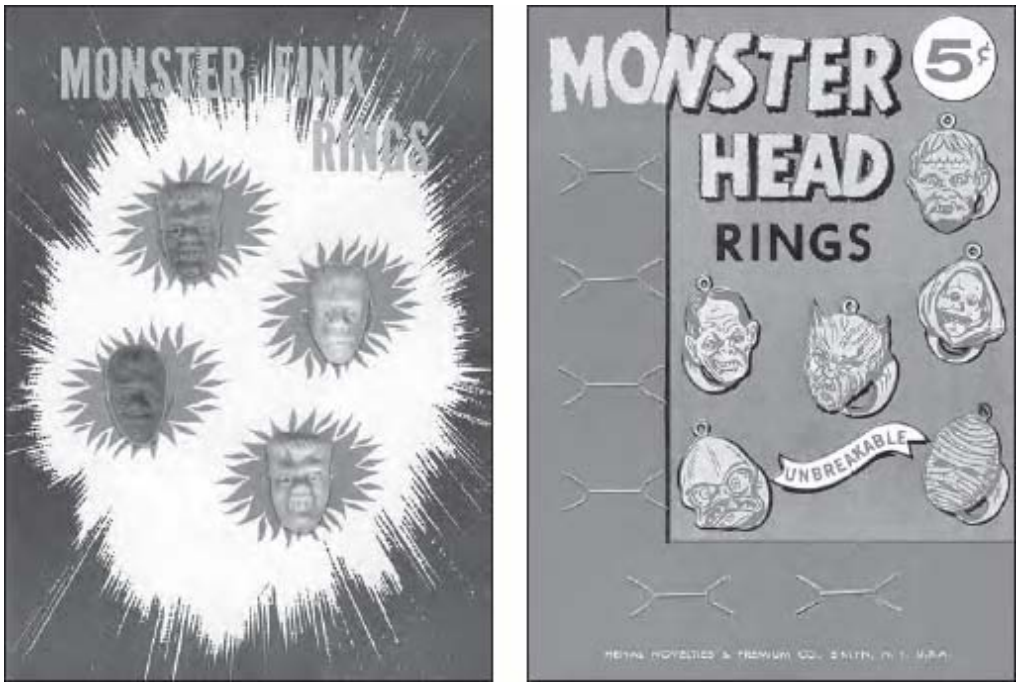
to cash in on the Ed ‘Big Daddy’Roth’s Rat Fink line of merchandise: scores of products— often charms and other vending machine novelties—bore the‘fink’ label as an indicator of counterculture oneness. Available were two different designs that came in a wide variety of colors, some gold and some marbled. The better of the two is a Frankenstein like creation baring a full set of pointy choppers who looks to be in need of a high fiber diet. The other is a bug eyed but otherwise nondescript ghoul that could be either a zombie or a toothless werewolf, depending on the imagination of the wearer. Henal also used these same molds to produce a line of Monster Fink Charms, which eschewed the adjustable plastic rings for a flimsy loop with which to attach a chain or string.

Having had a few of these as a child, I later came across a lot of both the rings and the charms on eBay in the early days; insistent on holding onto at least one of each variant, I wound up hoarding about eight of each monster design and selling the extras. Shortly thereafter, I purchased an original vending machine card that came with another four rings. Both of my purchases were fairly inexpensive, thanks to a recent warehouse find of Monster Fink novelties. The rings, the charms and the cards can still be found online for a reasonable price, upwards of ten dollars for a vending label complete with four rings or charms.

Right Truly horrifying? Anyone who has ever worn a pair of these would be inclined to agree. Monster Fangs (1975) Franco-American Novelty

Company

Henal also produced a series called Monster Head Rings, which boasted six different designs, namely a Phantom of the Opera-like ghoul, a Werewolf, a Grim Reaper, a Mummy, a bastard cross between a patchwork creation and a werewolf, and a rather befuddled looking fish man. Unfortunately, I have so far only been able to locate one of the cardstock vending machine labels, which I found at a local antique mall for ten dollars. The rings—made of “unbreakable” plastic and which originally sold for a nickel a piece— are currently AWOL from my collection and the collection of everyone else I know who has any interest in monster novelties from the sixties. Unfortunately, because of their elusiveness, I have no way to gauge current market value, although I can see a set going for thirty dollars with a card.



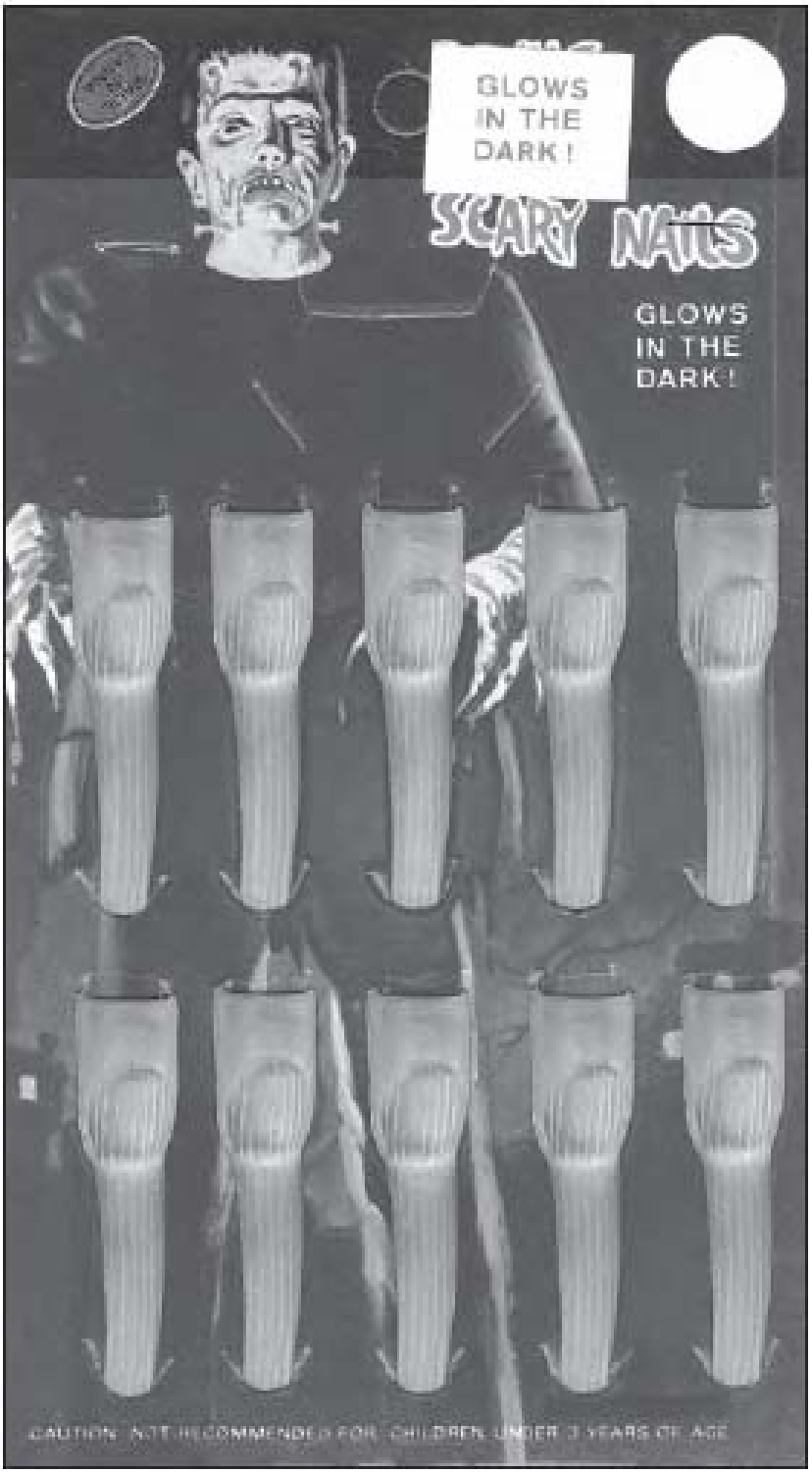
Left Vending machine label and assorted designs for Monster Fink Rings (circa 1960s) Henal Novelties & Premium Company

Right Vending machine label for Monster Head Rings (circa 1960s) Henal Novelties & Premium Company

With all these groovy rings at our disposal, where would we be without a set of Scary Nails to complete the look? In the tradition of Eerie Publishing, the monster used to promote these is a bloodied hybrid of Frankenstein's Monster and a garden variety vampire. Unfortunately, the product itself is not nearly as impressive as the fictional model. They are translucent. They glow in the dark. And the nails bend awkwardly once they reach the fingertip. In short, they are tacky in the extreme. But what irks yours truly is that anyone who bought these from this particular run was shortchanged by a set of plastic choppers. How so? Concealed beneath the "Glows in the Dark!" sticker are the words "Devils Teeth" in the same lettering as "Scary Nails", only red. When one catches sight of this (which is unlikely unless you either remove this tag or drench the sticker in lighter fluid), one then notices the cut made in the illustrated cardboard backer just above the nails, specifically designed to hold a pair of plastic fangs. Apparently, the production company decided to cut corners and re-issue the set sans teeth at some point in their history. Always observant, the author didn't even notice this quaint detail until he sat down to write this piece, even though these Scary Nails have been residing in his collection since before Y2K became a concern.

Last but not least is something I would never have owned when I was a kid, but cherish now despite any claims of higher aesthetics or a sense of personal pride. Spook Specs are fairly unique: a pair of glassless spectacles where the frames are cheap plastic reproductions of Frankenstein's Monster's bloated mug with the eyes cut out. If I had a pair of these that weren't still sealed on a card, you can be certain I would have modeled them for the benefit of my readers. (Yes, I have made the same threat to family and friends, who assured me that all such ties would be forfeit if I ever sought out an open pair of Spook Specs. I guess these things really *are* as spooky as they make out.) Although a grand contribution to the world of surrealism, I am guessing that most children either quickly tired of the Spook Specs' inherent geek value, or of the imminent headaches these damnable things produced.

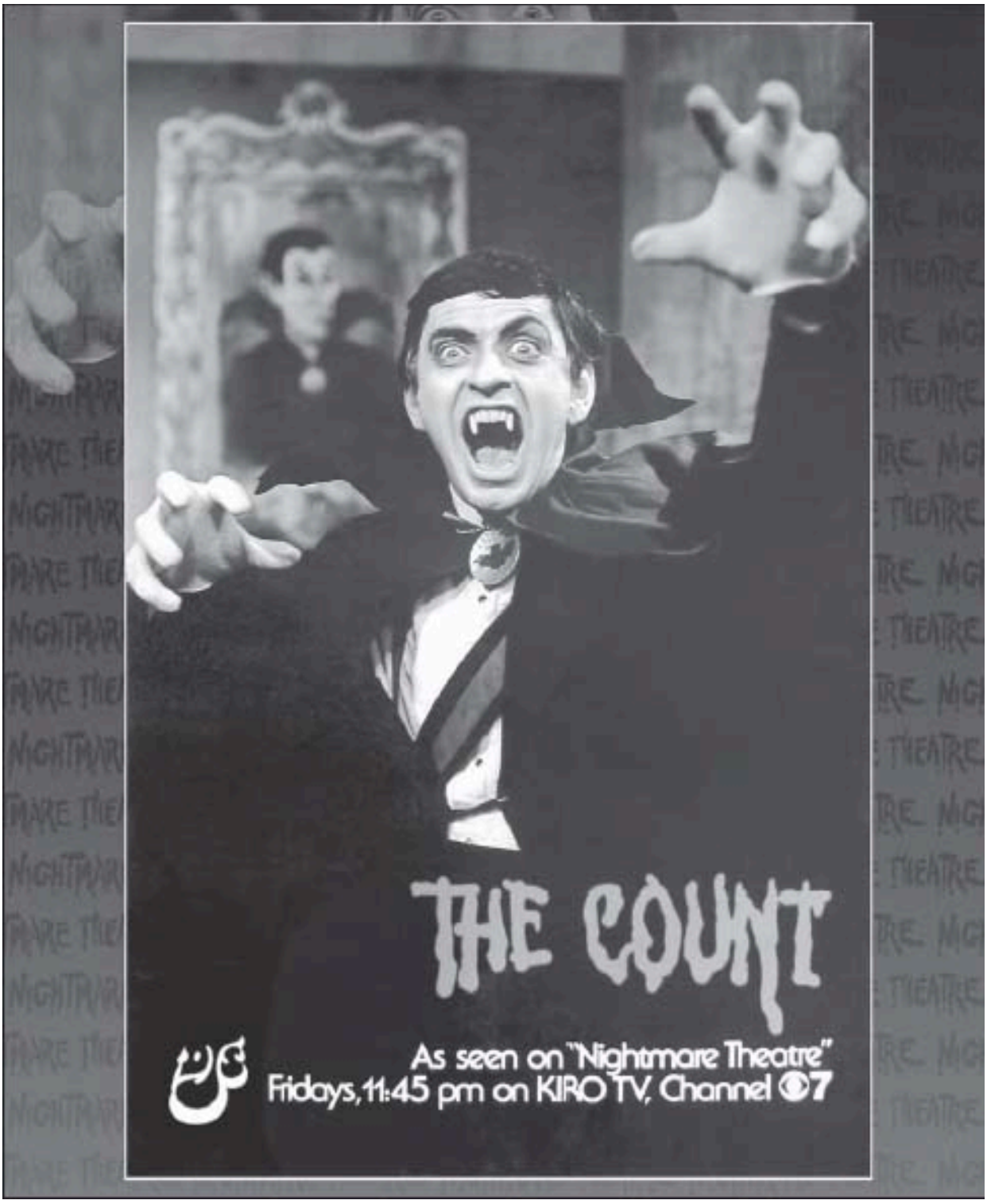
SPOOK
SPECS



Left C’mon, what’s not to love? Spook Specs (circa 1960s) Ben Cooper, Inc.

Right Groovy card art for Scary Nails (circa 1970s) So where the hell are my “Devils Teeth,” pray tell.

This was a fairly recent acquisition purchased from a friend who obtained an extra pair in a lot of monster and Halloween novelties he obtained from eBay for a song. Unopened Spook Specs usually only net about ten to fifteen dollars, due to an old store stock discovery that glutted online auction houses a few years back, and partly because slight variations of Spook Specs are still being made to this day, although the packaging and the accompanying artwork has changed over the years.



Promotional poster for Nightmare Theatre (circa 1975) DJs Records & Tapes
Composite reproduction from the collections of Danny Nowak and Bigfoot Comics & Cards.

**Warning: Not recommended for those with an aversion to effusive sentimentality and nostalgia*

FOR MOST horror fans in the thirty something age bracket and older, our earliest exposures to monster movies on late night television were introduced by a makeup laden host or hostess with a penchant for debilitating puns. If you were a child of the fifties, you may have been exposed to the ample charms of Mortieia Addams knock-off Vampira; an adolescent in the eighties would have been weaned on her valley bred doppelganger Elvira. If you were lucky enough to have been a sixties baby boomer, the heyday of horror hosts gave us the timeless likes of Dr Morgus, Ghoulardi and—last but not least— Zacherley, who even lent his marketable persona to numerous books and records over the years. At least one station in every major city can lay claim to a weekly creature feature program with a resident dime store ghoul as the viewer's tour guide in years past, and Seattle was no exception.

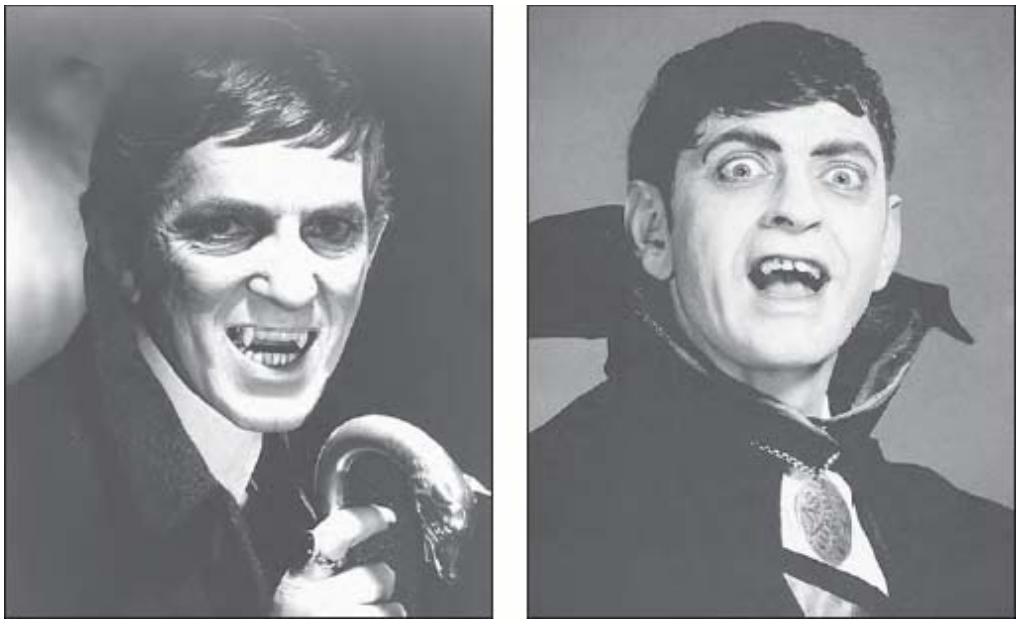
As a young boy in the seventies, I was lucky enough to have witnessed Washington's seminal horror host. He was called simply 'The Count,' and he was the mascot for the similarly generic sounding *Nightmare Theatre*.[1] From the time I learned to sneak out of bed, until the show went off the air a few years later, I watched the program religiously. It was specifically this show that taught me to read by the age of four, and it was the TV guide that took the stead *of Dick & Jane* for yours truly. My mother—having grown tired of me constantly asking her what was playing on television—promised me that if I learned to read the TV guide by myself, I could watch anything I wanted, any time, day or night.

Before long, I could recognize the telltale genre label of 'Thriller' and 'Sci fi' that accompanied every monster movie listed therein, and within a

year I had grasped all the basics of the written word. More importantly, I had discovered a curious event. Every Friday night, at 11:30 (unless pre-empted by a far less interesting movie of the week), Channel 7 would show not one horror film, but *two*, back to back. My parents attempted to recant their promise of "any time, day or night" but they soon relented; it was futile. Even when they said no, I could be found slinking out of my bed after they turned in for the night, gluing myself to the television set in the living room, the sound turned down to almost inaudible, staring glassy eyed at the flickering glass teat into the wee hours of the morning.

There was more to the viewing experience than three to four hours of monster mayhem. Although I made every attempt to see each and every horror flick shown on the five stations broadcast in our area, regardless of how many times I may have already seen them, this was different. *Nightmare Theatre* was an event, a weekly ritual that may have contributed to my burgeoning obsessive compulsive behavior. The show was hosted by a vampire, and a funny one at that. (Okay, so even at that age I knew The Count wasn't the real McCoy, but nonetheless it was fun to pretend he was.) Having been shot live on video, he seemed so much more real than the ghouls in the old scratchy b&w films he gleefully introduced to us.

The show opened with the soon familiar *Nightmare Theatre* logo, shown against a miniature old house exterior surrounded by lolling mist. As the camera approached, the scene dissolved into a painted set piece of a stone wall with a single paneless window, lit by several candles. The scene was accompanied by a deep sepulcher-like voiceover, spooky music and canned sound effects (the latter of which were culled from the title track on *Walt Disney's Chilling, Thrilling Sounds of the Haunted House).* A coffin sat center stage, its lid slowly opened by unseen hands (in actuality a wire suspended from a pulley in the lighting grid). Inside the casket resided a skeleton, which—through the cinematic magic of a dissolve fade—became The Count. The pasty faced ghoul would pull himself up with his white gloved hands, a familiar, wonderfully grating laugh escaping his lips. Show time!



Separated at birth? Not quite, but the hair and teeth are sure to throw many people off. Promotional photos for Jonathan Frid as Barnabas Collins **(left)** and Joe Towey as The Count **(right) Dan Curtis Productions and KIRO-TV Productions, respectively.** Dan Curtis Productions and KIRO-TV Productions, respectively.

The Count bore as much resemblance to *Dark Shadows'* Barnabas Collins as he did to a cookie-cutter Dracula (which probably only contributed to my affinity for the host). Although spared the obligatory widow's peak, he did wield a Bela Lugosi inspired Transylvanian accent, almost as clumsily as he handled everything else (all intentional, I might add). Rarely frightened by the films in which I reveled, his presence only reinforced the notion that monster movies were indeed *fun*.

Occasionally, I was allowed to have sleepovers on Friday, or would stay the night at another friend's house, but never would I miss *Nightmare Theatre*, with my guests usually falling asleep before the opening credits of the second feature scrolled across the screen. Wrapped up in my sleeping bag, I would watch in rapt attention until The Count made his melodramatic exit at the close of the show. Not knowing if they would ever re-run a film (remember, this was in the days before we were blessed with the luxury known as VCRs), I would commit every frame of film to memory, and can still recall those commercial ridden prints better than I can remember films I

watched only a few weeks ago. I still remember when I saw *Invasion of the Saucermen* (1957) and *The Mole People* (1956) for the first time, on a double bill.[2] And my introduction to the *krimi* genre, the gothic drenched Edgar Wallace crime thriller *Die Blau Hand* (1968), released here and aired as *The Creature with the Blue Hand.* And the Joan Crawford shocker *Strait-Jacket* (1964), which boasted the most graphic gore I had seen up to that time…which in retrospect constituted some fairly tame beheadings, mostly shown in silhouette. What I failed to put to memory, though, were the painfully brief wraparound sequences featuring my beloved host. Alas, I took him for granted, and in my later years have regretted not being more attentive.

Candid photo of Chris "J.P. Patches" Wedes and Joe "The Count" Towey in full regalia "clowning around" at an unknown benefit or event held at the Lake City Elks Club (circa 1985) City Dump Productions

I was seven when The Count introduced his last film in 1975. KIRO-TV continued to show horror movies on *Nightmare Theatre* until they finally dispensed with the program altogether in October of 1978. I continued to stay up late on the weekends to catch my favorite creature features, but it

was never the same without The Count. Its space age counterpart, *Sci fi Theatre*, which ran on another station on Sunday afternoons, outlived *Nightmare Theatre* by several years, but it never had a host to introduce its tired re-runs so it was of little consolation. (Besides, as much as I liked and still like *kaijû eiga* and spaghetti space operas, they could never compare to the tried and tested vampires and werewolves.) These Friday nights, along with those weekends spent scouring flea markets in the late seventies for monster memorabilia, are some of my fondest childhood memories. Many years later, as I began to delve deeper into cinematic lore for my self published fanzines devoted to all things horror, I started looking for information pertaining to *Nightmare Theatre.* Aside from the occasional first hand account of a local who also happened to catch it during its modest run (which was a start, since I was beginning to think I had dreamt up the whole thing), I turned up squat. Almost thirty years after The Count bid us all adieu, I finally discovered a link in January of 2004 that helped me to finally put these hazy recollections into context.

The Count (Towey) and J.P. Patches (Wedes) make a local appearance promoting who-knows-what (circa 1970s) City Dump Productions

The JP Patches Connection

ALTHOUGH *NIGHTMARE THEATRE* was something of a secret shared by geeky horror fans and children who ignored their curfew, hardly a child grew up in the Pacific Northwest who didn’t know of JP Patches. Beginning in 1958, JP (Julius Pierpont, if you were a Patches Pal in the know) was the

host of *The JP Patches Show,* which was the longest running children's show in the US when it went off air in 1981. Shown two hours every weekday, and an hour on Saturday for most of its run, *The JP Patches Show* was an often surreal, sometimes sophisticated, usually improvised program that featured a weathered clown who lived in The Magic House, which was conveniently situated in the city dump of Dumpsville, WA. (The Emmy award winning show had such an impact that not only is JP Patches still a local celebrity over twenty years after it aired its final episode, there have even been references to him and his show on *The Simpsons*, the only *real* measure of pop culture success.) Anyone raised on the show would immediately recognize such trademarks as his spinning window, his 'peek-a-vue' video monitor, his 'radar ears' (needed to hear Mr Announcer Man), and the abundance of confetti and faux cream pies. Those of us who were not quite normal were far more infatuated with his secret room, which was also where Ggoorrsstt the friendly Frpl hung out. (Ggoorrsstt was a Cyclopean creature covered in fake mohair that ate "Frpl fodder"—actually Styrofoam popcorn used for packing materials— through his armpits. When he first appeared, he sported three arms, but the awkward extra appendage "was removed to avoid anatomical confusion.") There was also the mysterious hole into which all JP's guests fell when they exited his shanty abode, despite his constant warnings. (Part of the scenario's charm was that the offscreen plummet was accompanied by some very familiar screams also pilfered from Walt Disney's well worn Halloween recording, a perennial favorite amongst young horror fans and desperate sound engineers. Chances are, it was the same copy used on *Nightmare Theatre.)* JP Patches—as well as innumerable supporting characters—was played by Chris (née Christus) Wedes, an ex-DJ and television actor who followed program director Fred Kauffman when he made the move from WCTN, St Paul to KIRO, Seattle in 1958. In Minnesota, Wedes had had some success in children's programming (including filling the oversized shoes of the original JP Patches, a character he soon made his own), as well as hosting sci fi serials (as Captain 11) and westerns (as Chuckwagon Chuck).

In 1960, Wedes' best friend Joe Towey took the reigns of director for *The JP Patches Show.* (Joe's brother Tom had directed Wedes' short-lived children's program *Mystic Mountain* in 1958, so there was already an association.) Occasionally, Towey also appeared in front of the camera as one of JP's offbeat (sometimes downright bizarre) acquaintances, including

that of the program's director 'Sam Gefeltafish,' handyman 'Mal Content,' and JP's evil brother'IM Rags'. In 1965, Towey was given the chance to star in his own KIRO-TV produced program, where he was cast as a fallible bloodsucker who introduced classic and not so classic horror flicks from the station's extensive film archives. The show was *Nightmare Theatre.*

Having been filmed on videotape, it is assumed that no footage survives as "tapes were wiped clean and reused each week." Towey's ghoulish persona had, in his few short years of broadcasting, become something of a local celebrity, although nothing on the scale of Wedes' alter ego JP (I still remember when I was quite young pining over an 8" x 10" photo my babysitter had gotten personally signed by The Count during a promotion in Seattle. Unfortunately, no amount of pleading or bribery would get her to relinquish this grail.) Now, all that I could find were a few sentences about him in Elena Watson's *Television Horror Movie Hosts* [McFarland & Company; 1991, reprinted 2000], some erroneous information on a website devoted to horror hosts, and a single photo and a few references on the official JP Patches website (www.jppatches.com). Worse yet, I soon discovered that Towey had passed away in 1989, severing the chance of me ever getting to talk to the man who had first exposed me to the horror films I still obsess over to this day.

Obviously, having finally found something of a lead, there was no way I could let this go. The Count would once again see the, uhm, light of day.

Exhuming The Count

HAVING DISCOVERED the man behind The Count and his connection with another childhood favorite, JP Patches, I decided to contact the man behind one of my less macabre childhood heroes. My fawning email was replied to with a short note and telephone number, which I wasted no time dialing. Before I knew it, I was talking to JP Patches himself, whose voice had lost none of its edge in all those years. I quickly discovered that one of the few tidbits of information I had gleaned from the internet (that Mr Wedes had directed *Nightmare Theatre)* was in fact quite false. (With that one small revelation, I had to scrap more than two thirds of the interview I had impatiently prepared the night before.) He offered to assist any way he could with the piece, but admitted that he might not be much help at all. I thanked him (doing my best not to sound like an awestruck schoolchild, which

wasn’t far from the truth) and told him I would email him with a list of questions shortly.

I had become more determined now than ever to make sure that *Nightmare Theatre* and its vampiric mascot would never be forgotten. With a questionnaire working its way to JP through cyberspace, I decided to try some other possible leads. The aforementioned *Television Horror Movie Hosts* was published by McFarland & Company, the self same people who put out my first two books *(The Gorehound’s Guide to Splatter Films from the 1960s & 1970s*, and its 1980s follow up), so I decided to contact author Elena Watson through them. I had hoped that, being an obvious aficionado of the subject, she would have continued to gather information about the subjects, including more on the elusive Count. An editor at McFarland responded to my query within the hour; unfortunately, my request for contact information was met with a, “We are sorry to say that Ms Watson is deceased.”

Promotional postcard for Nightmare Theatre (circa 1970s) KIRO-TV Productions From the collection of Robert Griffin

It was time to go to the source: KIRO-TV the station that produced the show. It didn't take me long to find their official website, but tracking down an applicable email address proved impossible. Picking one of numerous addresses that I knew would never make it near the desk of someone I needed to speak with, I sent off a succinct but pleading letter that I knew would wind up in some desk jockey's virtual trash bin. My only hopes of reaching someone at KIRO who could or would actually help me would require either an inside source from someone who had worked there, or going down there in person.

I was getting desperate. Someone out there had to know something. Being that the internet has become the hub of our information society, I spent the better part of thirty minutes throwing together a webpage begging any knowledgeable parties for help on the project. Within a few weeks, anyone entering the same search words that I was now typing out in my sleep would find my page at the top of their list of matching sites. That completed, I began wracking my brain for people I knew or have known in the memorabilia field that could help.

There was one individual, Jack, a collector and dealer who I met at a local outdoor flea market, the Puget Park Swap-O-Rama, when I was a wee lad of eight, and with whom I still remained friends. Having remembered that he had a near complete run of TV guides for the Seattle area that spanned the years *Nightmare Theatre* aired, I decided to give him a call. I had considered the thoroughly insane notion of compiling a list of all the movies that had been shown on *Nightmare Theatre,* in order by date, but without such an archive at my disposal it would be, well, thoroughly insane. Considering my luck so far, I should have expected my hopes to be dashed against the rocks, the remnants being pulled back to sea until the tide decided I was in need of some further pummeling. Less then a year before, he had sold his entire TV guide collection, which had taken him decades to accumulate. He did offer to sell me his only remaining piece of JP Patches memorabilia, a signed photo he had gotten from Chris personally a few years before at a local toy show, but this did little to console me.

During my searches, I stumbled across a website devoted entirely to horror hosts. Although their information on The Count was scant at best, I wrote to the webmaster in the hopes he might know something, or know someone who would. The site also boasted a trading post, of sorts, for which I penned a wanted ad as well as replying to some of the other horror host

fans posting for trade or correspondence. Sadly, I was not alone in my plight. Only our pancake makeup laden icons differed; the sound of desperation in our words and the need to recapture an irreplaceable part of our childhood was hauntingly familiar.

Days passed, with me waiting anxiously for any responses to my numerous emails. Nothing. No JP Patches. No KIRO-TV No horror host fans with a desperate itch to reminisce about spending Friday nights with The Count. Checking eBay for interesting JP Patches collectibles, I discovered a book called *Puget Sounds* [Superior Publishing, 1980] by David Blair Richardson, which was devoted to television programs produced in the Pacific Northwest. I immediately wrote to the seller and asked what it contained on The Count and *Nightmare Theatre,* ready to shell out whatever I needed to in order to acquire this long out of print book. I explained who Towey was, and described his relationship to *The JP Patches Show.* He wrote back, saying it didn't have much, a couple of photos and a few lines about the show. Disappointed but hopeful that what it did contain would get me that much closer, I thanked him and told him I might still bid on the book. Luckily, being the frugal (i.e. interminably destitute) person I am, I decided to check the online catalog of the local city library, where I worked for the better part of seven years. Sure enough, a quick search brought up this and the JP Patches book, which I had seen offered on the JP Patches website. Hoping it would share some tidbit of information about Towey not found on the site, I put a hold on this as well as *Puget Sounds.* Luckily, neither book was checked out, and I could pick them up the following day.

Within twenty four hours I discovered that the first volume had absolutely *nothing* on my beloved *Nightmare Theatre;* apparently, the seller was referring to JP Patches getting the scant coverage (which was funny considering its breathtaking staying power and longlived cult status) and not The Count. However, *JP Patches: Northwest Icon* [Peanut Butter Publishing; 2002] by Chris Wedes and Bryan Johnston, proved helpful. Although the information on *Nightmare Theatre* was pretty much a reiteration of what I had already gleaned from JP's site, it did boast two great stills of The Count, as well as a couple of Towey without makeup. Granted, it was a very small step towards my goal, but those few inches were very welcome. (As was the book, which prompted one of the most enjoyable

bouts of nostalgia I had experienced in quite some time.)

Various stills taken from the opening of Nightmare Theatre Halloween Special (1979) as well as a candid shot of Joe Towey in the make-up room preparing for a show (circa 1970s, if the sideburns are any indication) all culled from the J.R Patches Memories videocassette (1993) City Dump Productions

Before checking out the books, I decided to pick the brains of one of the reference librarians whom I had known from my previous years as a page and assistant technician. Within minutes of hearing out my sad account, she had tracked down Joe Towey's obituary from an online news-paper archive that was unavailable to the average internet surfer. Barely a page in

length, it offered some very pertinent information. Joe Towey had passed away on Sunday, April 9, 1989, in his Seattle home after struggling with an unspecified malady for the better part of a year. He was survived by a son, Chris, who was employed by KIRO-TV at the time of his father's death; this in itself seemed like a priceless lead. The brief article also mentioned that Towey continued to make appearances as The Count, both on and offscreen, for years after *Nightmare Theatre* went off the air. Unfortunately, the obituary also forced me to question some of the information I had already gathered from my few internet sources.

Originally published in the *Seattle Times,* a periodical that doesn't take fact checking as lightly as many websites, the obituary claimed that *Nightmare Theatre* ran from 1965 to 1977. Every other source I found claimed it was only from 1968 to 1975… but then some of the other sources also claimed that Wedes directed *Nightmare Theatre,* or that it ran only on Saturday nights after 1970.[3] (As it turned out, many sources—the *Seattle Times* included—assumed the program only lasted as long as The Count's participation. I would ultimately discover that *Nightmare Theatre* ran from 1964 to 1978.) This possible revelation only emphasized the fact it was imperative I talk to someone who had either worked on the show, or had access to KIRO's archives.

While talking with the librarian, I remembered that the library used to have a complete run of *The Everett Herald,* a local newspaper which they were in the process of transferring to microfilm when I last worked there. I asked about this, and sure enough, the library had every issue from the sixties and seventies archived. Which, of course, meant I could follow through with my obsessive compulsive urge to catalog every damn movie The Count ever introduced. Hell, while I was at it, I might as well do the same for *Sci fi Theatre.* (The latter I could probably do from memory, though, since the lazy programmers alternated between *Godzilla's Revenge* (1971) and *Beyond the Time Barrier* (1960) for the last few years of the program's sedentary existence.)[4]

Dreading the inevitable day of microfilm diving, I decided to focus on my newest lead: Joe's son, Chris. From the internet, I found numerous references to a Chris Towey who had worked as an assistant cameraman on everything from sports programs to independent films. Curiously, I located a phone number but not an email address. The thought of calling a complete stranger who may or may not be the son of the man I was writing about was

an uncomfortable proposition. An email isn't nearly as intrusive, and far less confrontational if the person doesn't take kindly to an unsolicited phone call from an obsessive compulsive horror geek while he's taking a nap, on the can, or worse. Like the inevitable drive to KIRO, I filed the number until desperation forced me to take the plunge. No, I *don't* have the *chutzpah* of a Karl Kolchak, which is probably why I chose to be a cloistered film reviewer and not an investigative reporter. (Besides…who would want to *hunt* monsters? That's akin to clubbing baby seals, in my book.) The next day, I saw my friend Jack, and was disappointed to find out that I had misunderstood him on the phone; what I thought was a signed promotional still was actually a small personally autographed postcard, and the photo on it was far from reproducible. He did loan me a few Sunday inserts from the *Seattle Times* with television listings with which I started my *Nightmare Theatre* index. We talked a little about the show; he was pretty certain that it had started in 1965 and not 1968, as he remembered watching it when he was in high school. Unfortunately, his recollections of The Count and his antics were about as hazy as mine.

Later that day, I received another email from Chris Wedes, bearing a succinct response of "Call me". Unfortunately, it would be two days before I would be able to ring him, as I was struggling with the last of some ongoing computer problems. When I finally reached him that Sunday, my timing proved impeccable as always. He and his wife had guests, and although I suggested we reschedule, he insisted on making the time to help me out. We talked for about fifteen minutes, and I was duly thankful that he decided not to put off what amounted to an impromptu interview. I asked about Joe's son Chris, and if he knew how to contact him. He didn't, and said it might be difficult tracking him down anyway since the man was often out of town, spending much of his time as a photographer for *National Geographic*. He then gave me the names of several people who worked at KIRO *during Nightmare Theatre's* run.

He then admitted that, because of the lateness of his friend Towey's show, he rarely visited the set, but he did confess to appearing on *Nightmare Theatre* once. In one of the show's more elaborate skits, he played a drunkard staggering home after hours who is attacked by the clumsy bloodsucker. In a punch line already weathered by the likes of *Mad* magazine, The Count becomes inebriated from his victim's tainted blood. Stumbling around Seattle, he breaks his tooth trying to bite a lifelike statue

in the Fremont district, then finds himself forced to employ the aid of a dentist, also played by Wedes.

I then asked Chris what his impressions were of Towey. “I loved Joe; he was my best friend at KIRO. We’d often go fishing together. He was a super guy; clever, funny. You know, you don’t get too many friends in life, real friends, and when they’re gone, you hate to see them go.” This was it: the first indication of the person behind the pancake makeup and contrived shtick. Chris’ recollection of his friend didn’t say much about his interests outside of television—aside from fishing—but how his voice softened spoke volumes about the kind of person Joe had been.

Fifteen minutes later, I gave Chris my undying gratitude, hoping he wouldn’t remember me as “that pesky little horror geek from Everett”. Now, I had some names, but I still lacked an ‘in’ at KIRO. I was just a lowly film reviewer; I didn’t have the resources as, say, a newspaperman. (Insert here a cartoon Chihuahua slapping itself upside the forehead screaming “You eeediot!” while brandishing a Peter Lorre accent.) Making haste, I emailed my high school chum Andrew, with whom I still kept in contact. A few years back, he had migrated east of the mountains and secured a job as editor on an award winning daily newspaper. If there was one person I knew personally with the resources I required, it would be him.

Unfortunately, I soon discovered that my view of newspapermen had been seriously skewed by seventies television shows; despite his position, Andrew didn’t have access to any arcane backdoors to KIRO’s inner workings. Disappointed, we then dove headfirst into comic geek talk, him bringing me up to date on the latest news even though I hadn’t read a modern comic in over four years. I hung up, holding a phone number to KIRO’s information desk he had gotten offline for me. Unprepared for even an impromptu interview, I set it aside until later.

As the World Churns

LATER TURNED out to be much later than I had planned. Weeks passed, my time being consumed by an online storefront that barely took care of the bills. It was the middle of March 2004 when I received a pleasant reminder of my belated quest: an email from another fan, Rob, and my first response to the Help Wanted page I had posted on the internet. Aside from the validation that I was not alone in my search for all things *Nightmare Theatre*,

the high point of his letter was the statement: “I have a scan which I will send along for you from when I met him in person back in the mid seventies.” I was completely absorbed with some online work, but broke off long enough to send a quick response, promising a more in depth reply by the weekend.

The next day, I received the scan as promised, of a postcard that showed The Count sitting in an armchair, baring his fangs at the cameraman. On the left was a printed signature of The Count and on the right the *Nightmare Theatre* logo followed by “Friday Nights on KIRO-TV 7”. Most people wouldn’t find themselves in awe of a thirty year old postcard, but I hadn’t seen more than three photos of The Count in just as many decades. The seven year old boy within me just stared at the lavender tinted offset reproduction, waiting for the memories to surface. Once I became lucid, I dropped Rob another quick letter, asking for permission to reproduce it in the article I was still writing. He eagerly conceded, and since he still lived locally, we promised to hook up soon to reminisce.

My promise of “soon” could be translated as “some time in the far flung future before we’re both too old to remember who the heck The Count was anymore”. Weeks passed, my life more turbulent than usual. When I wasn’t busy trying to eke out a very meager living selling collectibles, I was either helping out an ailing friend and his wheelchair bound mother, or verbally duking it out with a slime mold on eBay who was trying to run off with $265 of my very hard earned money. During our correspondence, Rob mentioned he remembered having watched a film from the sixties starring Roddy McDowall from which he swore the *Nightmare Theatre* theme music was pilfered. Of course, I assumed it had to be *It!* (1967) since that was the only horror film I knew McDowall had appeared in during this time.

Rob quickly corrected me; he was pretty sure that it wasn’t a horror film after all, but a black comedy called *Lord Love a Duck* (1966). The following week, after he had secured a copy of the film through his local library, he wrote to confirm his findings. He said he had tried to record the music from the film, in an effort to reconstruct the theme from our beloved show, but couldn’t because it was marred by dialogue and the sound effects track. He wasn’t sure if the soundtrack for the film included that particular piece of music, and he was hesitant to drop twenty bucks for a copy of the album even if it did.

J.P. Patches (Wedes) offers his stuffed dog Griswald as snack to the otherworldly Ggoorrsstt, the Friendly Frpl (Newman). Just kidding… I think. (circa 1970s) City Dump Productions

Eager for him to see this endeavor through, I offered my help in locating a cheaper copy of the vinyl and—if it proved to be usable—help him reconstruct the theme using my home studio equipment. He agreed to the collaboration, and I wasted little time in tracking down several like new copies of the vintage record through eBay for about half what he thought he would have to pay. I followed this up with a quick IMDb check, and discovered the composer of the piece, Neil Hefti (1922–), had numerous films and television series to his credit, the most notable being *Batman* (1966–68) and *The Odd Couple* (1970–75). It would be a few days before I could even consider following the belated KIRO leads, so I told him that I would keep my eyes peeled for a copy of the record if I happened to be out and about, and again told him we would have to hook up “soon”.

Nightmare Theatre advertisement from The Everett Herald (September 25,1964)

On one of my few forays into the outside world over the course of the next few weeks, I searched futilely for a copy of *Lord Love a Duck* and its even more elusive soundtrack. It seems I couldn't get a lucky break, even with something only peripherally related to *Nightmare Theatre*, until I received a second response from my pleading webpage. In the middle of April, as I was putting the finishing touches to the proposal that would become the book you now hold, I received an email from one Charles Lindenberg. Not recognizing the name, I soon discovered that he had once been the primary cameraman on both *Nightmare Theatre* and *The JP Patches Show.* Now living in the San Juan Islands, Chuck was eager to talk about his years with KIRO, so I immediately secured an interview.

I rushed him some openers about himself, Joe Towey and *Nightmare Theatre*, which he had back to me within a few hours. A fully fledged interview made its way back to him just as fast, and I waited impatiently as I waded through the handful of new facts. Along with some new names, I had a blow by blow description of the opening for the show, from the cameraman's point of view. Curiously, I discovered that his description did not entirely mesh with what Robert and I remembered about the wraparound

sequence. The most noticeable difference was that there was no transformation of a skeleton into The Count. I soon discovered that Chuck retired as cameraman in the early seventies, which led me to believe that the introduction evolved over the years, with only the very first exterior shot recycled for later use.

The next day, my theory was validated. While ambling about downtown Seattle with a friend, I stumbled across copies of the various JP Patches videos for sale. I plunked down twenty plus dollars for a copy of *JP Patches Memories,* a forty eight minute documentary from 1991 that Robert had mentioned included a minute long clip of The Count. Thinking it might be a live clip of him with JP during a promotion, I was surprised to find that it contained an intro from *Nightmare Theatre.* I had been led to believe that no such footage existed, yet here it was, although it was cut short before The Count could finish his opening monologue. It was enough, though, for me to realize that this opening differed from what Lindenberg had originally shot in the sixties and what Robert and I remembered from the early to mid seventies.

The sequence opened with the familiar pan of the camera as it drifted through a low fog and over a craggy, papier-mâché hilltop adorned with several sad looking trees (which looked suspiciously like twigs and very small shrubs). Standing on the peak was a dilapidated house that reminded one of Norman Bates' infamous residence, but was in all likelihood a doctored Addams Family Haunted House model kit from Aurora. As the camera neared the house, the scene faded into a cave like interior, the horizon a painted landscape of stalactites. On the ground, covered in cobwebs and a ghostly green glow was a coffin from which emerged our familiar host, who looked to be getting a little up there in years. A close up reveals that he is not wearing his trademark gloves, and he sports what looks like a promotional *Nightmare Theatre* pinback, and a makeshift tie tack bearing the Batman logo.

The scene does not bear the *Nightmare Theatre* logo, nor the creepy voiceover, but it does have the minimalist music and canned sound effects many of us came to associate with the program. From The Count's exclamation of "It feels so good to be out again" and "It's so good to be back", one gets the distinct impression that this introduction postdated the unofficial retirement of The Count in 1975; from what I have been able to ascertain from other fans, this was probably the introduction to a one-off

Halloween special that aired in 1979.[5] Having probably missed this particular show would explain the discrepancies with details from my own memories of the opening. Regardless, the footage was priceless to me, both as a fan and as someone desperately trying to piece together a history of the show.

Later that same day, I finally managed to track down a rental copy of *Lord Love a Duck;* watching it confirmed that Hefti's soundtrack for the George Axelrod film was indeed the source of *Nightmare Theatre's* theme (which consisted of two alternating notes—an E and an E flat—being played on an organ). By the time I got home, I had waiting in my mailbox the responses to the interview. Unfortunately, like everyone else with whom I had spoken, Chuck couldn't pin down exact dates or offer much insight into the origins of the show itself. Of course, I was asking quite a bit from these people, expecting details that would understandably be little more than blurry memories from long careers in local show-business. Sure, I was just a young kid when the show had made an impression on me, but many of these people were already seasoned veterans by the time I was making my weekly late night sojourns, and their involvement in the industry continued for many years after The Count gave his final performance.

Nightmare Theatre advertisement from The Everett Herald (November 20,1964)

Furthermore, I had gleaned something else from Chuck's responses that made me realize my plight may have been in some ways doomed from the start. Towey was, for all intents and purposes, the driving force behind *Nightmare Theatre;* being that the program and the mascot were his creations, the answers to many of the questions I had about The Count and *Nightmare Theatre* had probably died with him.

Nightmare Theatre advertisement from The Everett Herald (October 16,1967)

Daunted, but somehow more determined than ever to finish the article, I pressed on. I had a new lead, Bob Newman (who was most fondly remembered as JP's unrequited love interest, Gertrude), whom Chuck claimed was one of the many floor directors for *Nightmare Theatre.* Having obtained Bob Newman–s email address from the *JP Patches* website, I wasted no time in sending a him a cyber request asking if I could pick his brains on the subject of *Nightmare Theatre* (but not without offering some belated thanks for his myriad contributions to *The JP Patches Show).* As it was with Wedes, I don't know if I was more excited about talking to someone who may have participated on *Nightmare Theatre,* or talking with, well, the man who was Gertrude, Ggoorrsst, Boris S Wort, and a host of

other childhood favorites. I waited patiently, days passing, but no reply seemed forthcoming.

I still had not plumbed KIRO for information, and I decided it was high time I quit pussyfooting around and go to the source. All I needed was a few days to collate all the information I had collected so I could see just how far off the mark I actually was when I approached someone far more knowledgeable on the subject. I was finally getting close to some real answers. I could *feel* it.

For those readers who haven't picked up on my irrepressible bad luck, that last sentence is what we refer to as famous last words. Before I had the opportunity to finish the task at hand, I was hit with the news that my landlord was selling the house in which I lived, due to his having to cover some poor financial decisions. I had less than two months to scrape up enough money to move and find a place that was both cheap and would accommodate all my stuff. Long story short, I spent every day, twenty four seven, dumping my collection on eBay for a pittance, only to move into another place that was both too small and too costly, forcing me to spend countless more hours frittering away my life on that damnable online auction house. Almost five months later—October to be exact—I finally sat down to pick up where I left off.

In the interim, I had received a handful of emails through my webpage from people desperate to reminisce about *Nightmare Theatre*. Most offered little if anything in the way of useful information, and I was frustrated that—not only had I been forced to set this article and the book for which it was intended aside for the better part of a year—I hadn't had enough time to respond to most of the letters. (One person remembered seeing The Count on a television commercial featuring Cal Worthington, the colorful head of a local car dealership who was known for his 'dog' Spot—actually some large, exotic, usually drugged animal on loan for the ad spots—and for such hijinks as smashing in car windows with a sledgehammer. Luckily for us animal lovers, he never combined the two gimmicks.) October was tough, especially in the days leading up to Halloween, as I was incessantly pining for the days when I would curl up in front of the television on Friday nights, comforted by the flickering images that lulled me into a dazed stupor. I wound up subjecting my new roommate to a slew of my own late night double features. Unfortunately, having sold off the bulk of my video collection that summer, I had to make do with a great many films that were never shown on

Nightmare Theatre. Alas, as much as I adore all things sixties and seventies, the films from that era could never take the place of those b&w wonders that featured the likes of Boris Karloff, Bela Lugosi and Lon Chaney Jr.

Things were coming to a head. The first draft of my book was nearing a state of completion, and I still hadn't contacted KIRO. Granted, I had been bogged down with life's hurdles since I accepted this undertaking, but I was starting to get the feeling that there was something more to my reluctance, something subconscious. Was I afraid that KIRO, my last shot of cracking the mystery *of Nightmare Theatre,* would prove fruitless and thus leave me with nowhere else to turn? Or was I afraid that I would actually find many of the answers that I sought, thus bringing an end to my quest and leaving me again with only hazy recollections? Regardless, it was time to bring this chapter to a close, even if the story remained open ended.

The closing months of 2004 were particularly taxing, as my financial situation worsened. The desire to retreat into a childhood that spoke of simpler times increased, but time and means were at a minimum. I made it through the holidays, undoubtedly worse for wear; one of my New Year's resolutions was to wrap up the *Nightmare Theatre* project, to bring it to something of a conclusion. A full year had passed since I began working on the piece you are now reading, a year that could be best summed up by the analogy of a drunk stumbling in a dark alley looking for a pot to piss in. So, with nowhere else to turn, I telephoned KIRO.

Joe Towey at the helms of The J.P. Patches Show (circa 1970s) City Dump Productions

I was immediately put at ease by the woman who answered my call. When I mentioned what show it was I was writing about, she admitted, “Oh, my God, I remember that show!” Suddenly, her voice had that distinct ring of nostalgia that I had come to expect from people who recalled the show with fond sentiments. She flipped through her Rolodex trying to find someone who may have worked at KIRO during the show’s run, and transferred me to someone’s voicemail. I left a short, stuttering message (have I mentioned just how much I hate answering machines?) and called her back. She took another look through her list of personnel and came up with another name. Before she transferred me a second time, I asked if there was anyone in archives who could help me out with the basics. Unfortunately, it turned out that archives dealt primarily with news stories and not station history; furthermore, she said that the person in charge of that department was probably still in diapers when *Nightmare Theatre* went off the air, thus clueless as to what I was talking about. Unfortunately, the second transfer yielded a constant ring, but no voicemail.

The chance the first gentleman would get back to me was slim; heck, if he could actually translate my garbled message into English, it would be a miracle. Calling back the receptionist at KIRO a third time in one day would probably be tantamount to harassment, so I thought it best to wait at least twenty four hours. In the meantime, I decided to scour my files, having belatedly remembered that Wedes had given me a list of possible contacts at KIRO earlier the previous year. Although things were looking grim, I had not given up hope, stubborn bastard that I am.

I couldn’t leave well enough alone. This chapter wouldn’t see print for at least a year, and would only resonate with a handful of people when it did, so the thought that I had done little to extricate my childhood hero from the pages of local history weighed heavy on me. (Okay, so maybe I wasn’t nearly as burdened by the guilt as I make out, but I was at the very least thoroughly annoyed.) It was then I decided to follow the road traveled by so many other desperate fans pining for a lost childhood: I decided to create a webpage in honor of the influential program. Instead of a page, I wound up laying out an entire site toenailed to my online storefront for my self publishing endeavors. I had the memory to accommodate it, and it would take little effort to hobble together something modest and functional.

Months passed with nary a peep, my life still a veritable mess, but then out of the proverbial blue in May of 2005 came an email from Dave Drui,

morning host and production director for AM 820 KGNW out of Seattle. His letter started, “Stumbled upon your website for *Nightmare Theatre* and it seemed like you needed some sources to find out the inside story. I’m one. I worked on the show.” Without hesitation, I secured my third interview for this piece, and by far the most promising of the lot. From this, I was able to verify exactly who worked on the program, at least during the seventies. With a few more leads at my disposal, I attempted to resume my quest, having taken something of another forced sabbatical in the months previous.

Unfortunately, just as I was attempting to pick up where I had left off, I found deadlines for the book sneaking up on me, forcing me to bring the article to something akin to closure in order to supply a very patient publisher with copy. By July, I was still bogged down with *Trashfiend*, the book having taken on a girth I hadn’t expected. My finances were still a mess, especially in light of my living and breathing the book for the best part of a month without any means to secure an income. I was tired with a capital T, but for the first time since I had made my decision to unearth The Count, I was hopeful.

Things were finally falling into place, yet I still could not shake the feelings of loss every time I was confronted with the subject of *Nightmare Theatre*. Each time I came across a reference to a film that I had caught on Channel 7 late one Friday night for the first time, I found myself pining for the experience. I could still watch *The Mole People* and *Invasion of the Saucer Men* back to back and enjoy myself immensely, but I could never recreate the moment when these films first revealed themselves to me, courtesy of The Count.

At this point in my life, I am lucky in that I have lost very few loved ones, but I have strong memories of these people, and the photographs with which to spark them. For The Count, I have but a few pictures that stir within me some very vague, mostly fragmented recollections. Most everything else from my childhood that I cherished—my books and comics, the games and jigsaw puzzles, even the Avon monster soap dish and *The Lost World Monster Maker* from Mattel—I know I will eventually replace. Save for the memories of slogging through chores and school-work, the end of each week punctuated by an eagerly anticipated visit from The Count, *Nightmare Theatre* is something that is forever lost.

Postscript

AS I HAMMER OUT this last minute addendum, I am still recovering from a devastating computer crash, one that consumed most of this book in one fell swoop only weeks before I was to have the final drafts and rough layouts to the publisher. In a little over three months, I have pieced together, and—in many cases—completely rewritten the book from hard copy notes and fragments rescued from restored cache files. (What happened to my art files—some of which were irreplaceable in the time allotted me—is a horror story in itself.) At one point, I was certain that *Trashfiend* was lost, which would have made the book's already depressing closing statements eerily apropos. But, unable to let it all end on such a nihilistic note, I pressed on.

I was barely a week away from submitting the final draft of the book (this time, copies of everything have been saved on a secondary hard drive) when I received two unexpected emails within days of one another. The first was from a man by the name of…Joe Towey. Had this been one of the low rent horror movies reviewed within these pages, it would have been sent by the restless spirit of a childhood idol telling me that the book was cursed for reasons beyond my comprehen- sion and that I should abandon the project before even more ill befell my person and property. In lieu of a warning from beyond the grave, though, was a message from his grandson, stating, "I just found the site and think that it is really cool that you are doing that, though it is kind of weird to see a site about my grampa." He also offered whatever assistance he could in the way of stories and art, which gave me hope that this chapter wouldn't end on such a sour note. (Unfortunately, the chance that Joe the younger would be able to share any first person recollection was, well, infinitesimal, since he was born within a year of his grandfather's passing.) The second email was from one Derik Loso, a stage manager at KIRO who said he "might be able to help with a little bit of information and perhaps some visual material concerning Joe Towey as The Count." After I gladly accepted his help, he offered me a tour of the station as well as an opportunity to speak with several co-workers who had worked alongside Joe. He also mentioned access to some memorabilia and some video clips. Video clips? They had video clips? I rushed him a response, explaining that I would get back to him once I secured a ride to the studio. (Alas, I don't drive, otherwise I would have been down there the following day if it were at all possible.) Unfortunately, both of these offers came much too close to an already taxed deadline, which meant… a sequel? I wasn't about to let these opportunities slip through the cracks, even if it meant I

would be branded as a tease. I would do everything in my power to make sure this book was a success… if only so I could continue to tell the story of a man and his late night television program, both of which may be the reasons I wrote this book to begin with.

All I can say is… stay tuned for more after these commercial messages.

NOTES

1 Apparently, The Count was not the first; this title went to Warren Reed & Frankie, who hosted a late night Seattle show in the fifties. During the seventies, The Count had some competition, supplied by Robert ‘Dr ZinGRR’ Smith, who had his own program on Channel 13 from 1971 to 1976. As a child, I never caught ZinGRR’s exploits, because where I lived had limited reception, and 13’s signal would not reach us for another few years.

2 Having owned these films now since the day they were released on tape, I still attempt to relive the experience once a year without fail, curled up on the couch with a ready bowl of Boo Berry, Count Chocula or Frankenberry in my lap. (Occasionally, an unwary friend is subjected to the experience as well, but they never come back for seconds the following year when invited. Maybe they just don’t like General Mills monster cereals, I don’t know.) Unfortunately, the repeated double bills never hold up to the first time; not because I’m thirty years older and have become jaded to the films’ charms, but because The Count isn’t there to, well, interrupt the proceedings with a bad joke or accidentally slam a coffin lid on his gloved fingers.

3 The extended date rang true, at least as far as the seventies was concerned. I thought I had watched *Nightmare Theatre* for more than the three plus years that the 1968–75 airing didn’t account for—with or without The Count—but chalked it up to a young child’s faulty memory.

4 *Sci fi Theatre*, which was usually aired between twelve and two in the afternoon, has had a major impact on my viewing experience as an adult. To this day, I can only watch vintage Godzilla films and Italian sci fi from the sixties during the daylight hours, lest I fall asleep midway. Not pertinent to anything, this endnote—like several of the others—is included only for those desperate readers who for whatever sick reason can’t get enough of my maudlin reminiscences. Be assured I’ve done my best to accommodate you, you poor bastards.

5 I later received from another fan an MP3 struck from an audiotape recording he had made of the show back in 1979. Although the opening monologue was missing, the existing bits mention the film being shown was *Frankenstein: The True Story* (1973); after a quick jaunt to the library, I was able to verify that this special aired October 31, 1979, at 11:30 on Channel 7. And, yes, I myself missed The Count's return—and ultimately final—television appearance. With luck, the rest of the footage not shown on JP Patches Memories was also spared.

Anyone interested in further plumbing the depths of all that is *Nightmare Theatre,* including full program schedules and other fan reminisces, feel free to check out my webpage at www.nightmaretheatrenw.net.

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In Memory of Joe "The Count" Towey (d. April 9, 1989)

Interview conducted via email April 2004

DURING MY ONLINE SEARCH for all things *Nightmare Theatre,* I was approached via email by the man who functioned as camera one on the show during its formative years. Eager to get the scoop from someone who worked on the set of this beloved program, I opened a dialogue that would bring to light many aspects of the show which would only be privy to someone in his position.

Born Charles Lindenberg on September 8, 1932, in Antofagasta, Chile, Chuck moved to the United States because his father wanted him to be educated and brought up there. (His father, who flew for Pan American Grace Airways in Panagra, was tragically killed in an airplane crash when Chuck was young.) After a stint in the Coast Guard, he took on numerous 'keep tummy filled' jobs; having always been fascinated by the fields of radio and television broadcasting, he jumped at the opportunity when a part time position opened up in 1964 at KIRO-TV. Working primarily as a cameraman for KIRO for the next ten years, he migrated to KOMO-TV in 1974, where he worked until 1986. During the early seventies, he also produced sales pitch films as a sideline for his own independent company, IX Film Productions, and was instrumental in designing and building the studio for Viacom's Channel 3, which was then situated in Everett.

Now officially retired and living in Friday Harbor with his wife Nancy, Chuck spends his time writing articles on such subjects as boating and aviation, and is currently working on his second novel. His first book, *The Academy,* is a post WWII novel about a naval academy on Bainbridge Island, which he self published and is nearly sold out. He is also a licensed pilot and amateur ham radio operator. A man of many interests who has no trouble keeping busy, Chuck still looks back fondly on his early years working for KIRO on *Nightmare Theatre* and *The JP Patches Show.*

TRASHFIEND: ***To get started, most people— meaning anyone who was a young child in the Pacific Northwest during the sixties and seventies— rememher The JP Patches Show, on which you were camera one until the early seventies. During this time, you also worked on Nightmare Theatre. Can we assume you landed the job on Nightmare Theatre because of your association with The JP Patches Show? Who else worked on Nightmare Theatre, besides Towey and yourself?***

CHUCK LINDENBERG: No, whatever shows or commercials that were scheduled were shot by the cameramen on duty at the time. Those on second shift did *Nightmare Theatre.* Working on *The JP Patches Show* was for the daytime cameramen. Since I worked both shifts during my time at KIRO, I got to work on both shows. Camera two [on *Nightmare Theatre]* was manned by Vic Malm, Art Dupont, and others I can't remember. I think Kevin Blazina was the audio man, but I'm not sure. The floor directors were

Bill Gerard, Norm Huff, Paul Bishop and Bob Newman. Nick Freeman was the very low voice introducing the show.

How did Nightmare Theatre originally open?

The outside shot was built on top of a large table with a scale model building. Dry ice was used for the fog. Camera one would do a slow dolly in, tilting down as it approached the table model (there were no zoom lenses in those days). As it was closing in on the building they did a slow dissolve to camera two which was already starting a slow dolly up to a flat painted to look like a big door made of gray stones. After it came up to the doorway they did another very slow dissolve to camera one now dollying towards the coffin, supported on sawhorses. The floor director slowly opened the coffin lid using fishing line and a pulley. Joe would stir, moan, sit up and face the camera, which was to his left, and go into his spiel on the night's movie.

The involved opening segment was initially practiced over and over, done several times and finally taped. It was this tape that was subsequently played back for the opening of each show, with a slow dissolve from the videotape to the camera on the coffin. In the long run, it sure saved a lot of work!

Whose idea was Nightmare Theatre, or how was the show conceived?

I have no idea who came up with the show, but it was probably Joe's idea. He was very creative.

Was Nightmare Theatre improvised like* The *JP Patches Show, with the cast and crew working out the general direction only minutes before filming?

All of the dialogue was adlibbed by Joe. He didn't need a script; he was really into it. Once in a while one of the crew would mention something applicable to the night's movie and Joe might incorporate it.

On The JP Patches Show, Towey would make occasional guest appearances; did anyone from Wedes' program ever show up in front of the camera on Nightmare Theatre, or was it pretty much a one-vampire show?

The only guest appearance I personally remember was the night when station manager Lloyd Cooney sat up in the coffin, turned to face the camera

and said: “Tonight I want to talk about the garbage issue.” Lloyd did regular editorials for KIRO’s news programs.

Did The Count ever appear on The JP Patches Show for cross promotion?

He may have, I can’t remember.

Was Joe Towey involved in any other projects besides Nightmare Theatre and The JP Patches Show? Can you recall any appearances he made as The Count outside of the show?

Joe was a director, first and foremost. As such he directed many programs for KIRO, not just these. As for personal appearances, I believe he made several as The Count.

In reference to both Nightmare Theatre and The JP Patches Show, what was the cast and crew’s working relationship like? Did you pretty much have free rein when it came to content?

Ultimately it was Chris’ decision (on *The JP Patches Show)* as to each show, but he definitely solicited input from all of the crew, which we all gave him. The working relationship between crew and cast was very pleasant and everyone got along. Naturally there were occasionally conflicts of ideas but nothing serious. We generally got everything done on the first take. Joe was a very good director and easy to work with. We all enjoyed working on it very much, as it was a real escape from the usual stuff.

When and why did you leave KIRO-TV? What did you go on to do after your stint there?

I left KIRO early in the seventies, having been offered the job of operations manager for Channel 3 in Everett.

How do you best remember Joe Towey?

First as a good friend. Then as a patriot (he was a former US Marine), excellent director and a plain character. It was a privilege to be his friend.

Do you have any funny anecdotes pertaining to Nightmare Theatre?

The funniest one I remember was Lloyd Cooney’s unexpected appearance. There were many very funny bits and pieces but they flew by so fast it would be hard to grab one.

What are your fondest memories of working on Nightmare Theatre?

What can you say? It was just plain fun, and to think we got paid for it!

What was the first horror film you saw as a child? What kind of impression did it leave on you?

Good grief, that was too long ago. I don't remember the first, but I do recall checking under the bed after seeing *Them!* (1954).

Having probably sat through many of the films aired by Nightmare Theatre, what do you see as the most noticeable differences between modern day horror fare and those shown on the program?

I think the gore was subtle then. Today nothing is left to the imagination and they are just plain gross, in my opinion.

In closing, what do you want the epitaph on your tombstone to read?

I haven't thought that far in advance. And really, does it make a difference?

Interview conducted via email June 2005

SIX MONTHS after constructing a website devoted to all things *Nightmare Theatre,* I received an email from a gentleman who turned out to be floor director for the show in its later years, and who was eager to share his experiences while working on the program. Not only did he fill me in on some of the workings of the show, and why it was eventually cancelled (both of which, as it turns out, were inextricably linked), he also gave me a great deal of insight into Joe Towey's character, which only corroborates the respect, warmth and admiration that has been vouchsafed by his peers in the industry.

Dave Drui was born June 22, 1953, in St Louis, Missouri, but grew up in the Seattle area having moved there when he was five years old. Even as young as nine, he had an interest in broadcasting; while others were out

playing sports, he was in his basement DJing on his homemade radio station, or constructing TV cameras out of cardboard boxes using toilet paper rolls for lenses. Foreshadowing things to come, he even had a working TV set in his garage that was a copy of the one in *The JP Patches Show.* He broke into radio as a DJ during the early seventies while still enrolled in college at the University of Washington. At age twenty, he secured his second job in radio broadcasting, working full time for KIRO. After graduating in Radio-TV Communications he moved over to KIRO's television department.

After his stint at KIRO-TV, he tried to crack the big time and moved to Los Angeles in the eighties, where he worked in radio station management, as television director for a large church ministry, and finally as a radio network anchorman. After a decade of "living in a town riddled with drive-by shootings, smog, and a clog on the freeways", he moved back to the Pacific Northwest in order to raise a new family where there was "some semblance of sanity". Since that time, he has worked for Salem Broadcasting, and is currently the morning host on AM 820 KGNW, where he also functions as production director for the program. In addition to that, he also freelances for a handful of national radio ministries to which he contributes his vocal talents. He currently resides in Seattle with his wife of twenty years, Becky, and has three sons.

TRASHFIEND: *What was your first work in the television industry?*

DAVE DRUI: 'Work' means 'paid', so even though I did some volunteer work with KCTS-TV my first paycheck in television came in 1975 at KIRO-TV as a floor director.

What was your job description as floor director on Nightmare Theatre?

Actually there were a couple of us working the shoot. There was a full time floor director who worked weeknights (3:30 to midnight) and a part timer. I was the part timer, working Thursday and Friday, 6:30 to midnight. I helped out with productions like *Nightmare Theatre* and any commercials we'd produce inbetween the evening news and eleven o'clock news. Once a month, on a Thursday, we'd put up the set for *Nightmare Theatre* and crank out usually a month's worth of opens, closes and mid breaks. As a floor director I did set construction, pulled camera cable and threw cues to the on air talent, relaying information from the director up in the booth that I heard on my headset. Lots of sweeping up too. Ahh, showbiz!

Who were the other people directly involved with Nightmare Theatre during your tenure on the show? How were the program's opening and closing conceived and by whom? How much of it was improvised by Joe Towey?

There were also two camera operators on the floor, or in the studio, then upstairs in their respective booths there was a director, a technical director who pushed the buttons for the shots the director called for, an audio person, a camera shader who controlled how the cameras looked, and a video tape operator. The neat thing about Joe and Chris (Wedes) was that they accepted input from the whole crew on how to tie in a funny bit to the title of the pictures we were showing on a particular night. Joe had final say, of course, but he never said "That idea is stupid" or "We're not gonna use that". It was a group effort coming up with the ideas, usually, adding a punch line here or there but it was always Joe adlibbing his way through it as the tape rolled.

What was KIRO-TV's stance on Nightmare Theatre? Why was it ultimately cancelled?

Nightmare Theatre and *The JP Patches Show* were an embarrassment to KIRO. Here we were in the seventies, with KIRO trying to be on the cutting edge with all their fancy news gimmicks—first with the instant news camera, the Doppler radar, etc.—but they still had shows on the air that were throwbacks to the fifties. Even though they were still extremely popular, the management couldn't wait for an excuse to pull the plug on these shows. I remember the opening of the show that killed *Nightmare Theatre.* It was actually a really funny idea that someone came up with to have a camera locked off on a side view of Joe's coffin, and through the magic of editing they'd have one person after another sleepily stumble out of the coffin… kind of like the clown car at the circus with dozens of people coming out of it. The bit started with crew members, and then the crew started grabbing people from down the hall—radio folks, office staff, anyone they could find in the building that night. Then finally The Count emerges from the coffin and says "Wow, that was a wild party!" The opening ran about ten minutes. It was hysterical! KIRO management didn't think so. Lloyd Cooney, the president of KIRO, happened to be watching that night and blew his stack. He didn't understand that no one tuned in to *Nightmare Theatre* to see the funky old b&w Vincent Price movies we'd all seen over and over again, but viewers' attraction to the show was the funny opens, mid breaks and closes!

Lloyd thought that long drawn out open was just too much and it was off the air the following week.

Was this in 1975?

You tell me. Sounds about right, though.

Didn't the program continue as Nightmare Theatre but without Joe Towey's wraparound for a while? Were you involved with the one-off Halloween special featuring* The *Count and an all too familiar Nightmare Theatre backdrop that was aired 1978? If so, how did it come about, considering KIRO's lack of enthusiasm for the program?

Seems to me that sounds right. Yeah, just the movies without Joe for a while, since the sales team had already sold it, and KIRO was and *is* never one to give up money! Don't know anything about the special unfortunately. I was working mornings on *The JP Patches Show* by then. The night crew probably put that together.

When and how did you become involved with The JP Patches Show?

Usually you had to wait for someone to quit or die to move into a full time position at KIRO, but in 1977 a decision was made to expand. Since KIRO had two studios—one with the sets for the everyday live shows like *JP* and the news programs, the other empty—KIRO thought they could make more money by having an on air live crew in Studio A and one that just produced commercials all day in Studio B. Rick Jones, who had been the floor director for the clown show forever, wanted a break and opted to work in commercials so I was promoted to full time morning floor director. I worked alone until after the clown show, and Bob Newman got out of his makeup and came on the crew as our second Studio A floor director. He only worked Monday, Wednesday and Friday as *JP* was a second banana at that time, 1977–78 (a money saving measure by KIRO). Sometimes another floor director from Studio B came over to help, Sharon Leimbacher (now Howard), when she didn't have a production to set up for. Joe decided this would be a good way for me to have more input into the show by adding the second floor director… more flexibility for me handling the props, throwing pies, coming up with plot ideas, and even occasionally acting on the show. Funny thing, legally Joe couldn't request me to come on as an actor because then KIRO would have to pay me according to my AFTRA contract, but if

‘I’ suggested it and volunteered to appear it was no problem and KIRO didn’t lose any money. I remember begging for money out of the budget to buy shaving cream for the pies we threw. Sometimes I wouldn’t bother and just bought the Barbasol myself.

Do you remember some of the roles you played on The JP Patches Show?

The first one I just adlibbed into a bit JP was doing with Miss Smith (Newman), where she was telling him a joke about a frog. Since we had a frog on the show named Morgan who was nothing more than a hand puppet that Bob operated and provided the voice for, I just shoved him on my hand, pushed him in camera view, imitated Bob’s voice and said to the audience “Say, I didn’t like that very much!” They both cracked up. They’d been working with just the two of them for so long it was a bit disorienting having a third cog on the show again, but that opened the door for me to do other bits, as Ggoorrsstt the friendly Frpl, as Joe Cannelloni the Green Grocer, as Mayor Royer, and finally in the Thanksgiving special as a Darth Vader knock-off, Y from the Planet Z. I played it for comedy and instead of sounding deep and scary like James Earl Jones I used a voice like Don Adams doing Maxwell Smart.

On The JP Patches Show, Towey would make occasional guest appearances; did anyone from Wedes’ program ever show up in front of the camera on Nightmare Theatre, or was it pretty much a one-vampire show?

No. Since we taped at night, Joe was the only talent there, although I would occasionally lend a hand as a monster at the door. Once I was a severed hand inside a box under Joe’s arm that suddenly sprang to life and choked him during an open; I was actually crouching underneath Joe’s cape behind him and there was a hole cut in the end of the shoebox to slip my hand through. I was doing all kinds of things back there to make Joe break up while we were taping—that was always the goal—but he never did.

Did The Count ever appear on The JP Patches Show for cross promotion? Can you recall any appearances he made as* The *Count outside of the show?

I know that Joe made some personal appearances with JP and by himself, especially around Halloween, but on the clown show we had our

own cast of evil nemeses, all played by Bob New- man, like Boris S Wart, the second meanest man in the world, and the dreaded witch Zenobia who would materialize every year around Halloween.

Besides the clip that appears on the JP Patches Memories video compilation, do you know of any Nightmare Theatre footage that has survived?

Unfortunately, due to the high cost of videotape in those days (it was all done on huge reels of two inch tape, not VHS), there's none of that stuff left as far as I know. If anyone would have any of it, Mike Speten is your best bet. He ran the tape machine and is the reason *The JP Patches Show* has any archive clips available at all, because he started taping some on old two inch videotape that was about to be discarded.

It has been rumored that KIRO'TV had the largest collection of horror films in the Pacific Northwest. Was this true, as far as you know? Who chose the films to be aired?

I'm not sure about that. Dick Jacoby was the film vault guy, who doesn't work there anymore.

How do you best remember Joe Towey?

My last day at KIRO Joe, who normally only worked mornings, stayed until the very end of my shift and walked me out to the door at six pm. Not knowing what to say as we parted, I held out my hand to him and said, "Well, it was great working with you". He wouldn't shake my hand and was actually offended! He told me, "You don't know if we'll work together again or not… don't say that… don't say 'it was great working with you' like it's all over! Just don't say that!" Sure enough, six months after I moved to Los Angeles, California, I got a call from KIRO and they flew me back and I was once again working with Joe— and JP and Gertrude—as an actor this time on a *JP Patches* Thanksgiving Special.

What are your fondest memories of working on Nightmare Theatre?

It was always a gas the one night a month we did the taping. Lots of fun playing around with the different ideas for the bits Joe would do. Since it was taped we took a lot of liberties with not-so-airable outtakes before we taped the one we actually aired. Some were pretty raunchy…but pretty

hysterical, though. Like the hand through the shoebox routine I explained above. Before we did the actual take where I slowly reach up and strangle The Count, I couldn't resist and elevated my hand slowly with just the middle finger extended. Joe didn't miss a beat and kept up his Transylvanian patter by inserting "…and da scary movies we haff for you tonight [my gesture] and the letters vee are going to get from da viewers… and vee will be off the air! I can see it… it vill be the end of my career!" I've never laughed so hard!

You made the offer of regaling me with more Nightmare Theatre anecdotes when you first contacted me through my website, so now I'm holding you to it. For the benefit of us fans who are desperately trying to relive these years, fire away!

There was another one that didn't make the air, but it should have. Joe was going to surprise the viewers; instead of being inside the coffin he would be behind it, and as we're holding on the usual side shot of the box waiting for him to emerge he would suddenly slam down the lid from behind. Remember, the goal was to get Joe and try to make him break—character, that is, and get him to crack up laughing—so I sneaked a bucket of water on the set behind a camera and just as the lid of the coffin slammed down revealing The Count behind, I was there immediately dowsing him with the full bucket of water. It was an almost instantaneous "SLAM, WOOSH!", but again Joe never missed a beat. He just kept on with his patter and inserted "…and the people who work on this show—or should I say *used* to work on this show—are going to pay, boy are they going to pay!"

And did he ever get or try to get payback for all the tricks the cast and crew pulled on him over the years?

He didn't, but Bob Newman did. Even though I got Joe once with the water, Newman paid me back for the buckets and buckets I'd dowsed him with over the years on the clown show. When JP went on vacation, Bob would host the show alone—an hour a day for two weeks with no one to play off of—so it got a little tedious at times. I tried to break in with a little humor by knocking at the door, he'd open it and I'd pummel him with a bucket of water.

There was one day in particular. There were all the little stuffed creatures that JP had around the set that issued nothing more than a giggle or

a sound effect supplied from the audio man's booth, and that day they all had miniature buckets full of water, and over the course of the hour they all hit Newman with (what amounted to) gallons and gallons of water. Bob got so that he could hardly answer the knock at the door he was laughing so much. Well, he got me back. My last day on the show, JP had come to say goodbye and, sure enough, as I was leaving, Newman was waiting outside the door with a full bucket of you know what and he soaked me from head to toe. The only difference was that, after the show, Bob always had a change of dry clothes to get into. I didn't. I had to work the rest of my eight hour shift soaking wet. Thanks Newman! But it sure was a blast!

What was the first horror film you saw as a child? What kind of impression did it leave on you?

Some mom in the neighborhood took a bunch of us kids to the movie theatre in Redmond one summer day to see *Billy Rose's Jumbo* (1962) with Doris Day and Jimmy Durante. Little did she know there was a terrific horror flick preceding it on the double bill. It involved knights, witches, swamps, and was excellently done… it gave me nightmares for years! Wish I could remember the name of it.

I also remember Saturday afternoons watching horror flicks on TV… maybe it was Channel 7. My favorite was a giant ant film—not *Them!* (1954)—with no name stars, fake looking ant puppets and really bad acting. Real camp stuff. The best scene was where expert scientists are called out to check out the big marks in the sand caused by these creatures. Nothing special, just some holes in the ground. After a grueling inspection, one guy in a lab coat looks up from a hole and says very seriously, "There's only *one* thing this could be… giant ants!" I don't remember the name of the film, but it was something like *Attack of the Giant Ants*, although I could be getting the title mixed up with my second favorite awful horror flick of the time, *Attack of the Crab Monsters* (1957).

Having probably sat through many of the films aired by Nightmare Theatre, what do you see as the most noticeable differences between modern day horror fare and those shown on the program?

So much of the old films relied on your imagination; they were much scarier for that reason. I don't even watch the modern slasher films just for that reason.

I don't blame you. Although I have no problem with gore, the older films are so much more atmospheric and evocative. Are there any modern horror films you've seen you do like?

I wouldn't say horror films are my favorite, but rather suspense thrillers, classics like *Rear Window* (1954), *Psycho* (1960) and even *Jaws* (1975). My favorite actual horror flick was *The Abominable Dr Phibes* (1971) with Vincent Price. I remember liking that one a lot in high school. I've just ordered it on DVD; I hope it holds up over the years.

In closing, what do you want the epitaph on your tombstone to read?

What is this, *Inside the Actor's Studio?* Okay, how about: "Here lies Dave Drui…who used to work with Joe Towey."

Appendix

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Aaron ‘Pat’ Boyette (1923–2000) alca Alexander Barnes, Bruce Lovelace, Sam Swell

selected horror comics checklist (1966–79)

.....

BARON WEIRWULF’S HAUNTED LIBRARY see HAUNTED

BEYOND THE GRAVE

(1975–76) [Charlton Comics]

v1#1 (Jul 1975) 25¢

CREEPY

(1964–83) [Warren Publishing]

#18 (Jan 1968) 40¢
#22 (Aug 1968) 40¢
#33 (Jun 1970) 50¢
#35 (Sep 1970) 50¢
#37 (Jan 1971) 60¢
#39 (May 1971) 60¢
#47 (Sep 1972) 75¢
1971 Annual (1970) 60¢

CREEPY THINGS

(1975–76) [Charlton Comics]

v2#6 (Jun 1976) 30¢

EERIE

(1965–83) [Warren Publishing]

#15 (Jun 1968) 40¢
#28 (Jul 1970) 50¢
#30 (Nov 1970) 60¢
#33 (May 1971) 60¢

GHOST MANOR first series

(1968–71) [Charlton Comics]

Becomes GHOSTLY HAUNTS with v1#20

v1#13 (Jul 1970) 15¢
v1#16 (Jan 1971) 15¢
v1#17 (Mar 1971) 15¢
v1#19 (Jul 1971) 15¢

GHOST MANOR second series

(1971–84) [Charlton Comics]

Cover title VISIT GHOST MANOR

v1#1 (Oct 1971) 20¢
v1#2 (Dec 1971) 20¢
v3#12 (Jun 1973) 20¢
v3#14 (Sep 1973) 20¢
v3#16 (Dec 1973) 20¢
v5#24 (Jul 1975) 25¢
v5#25 (Sep 1975) 25¢
v5#26 (Nov 1975) 25¢
v6#29 (Jun 1976) 30¢
v6#30 (Aug 1976) 30¢
v6#31 (Oct 1976) 30¢
v9#43 (Jun 1979) 40¢

GHOSTLY HAUNTS

(1971–78) [Charlton Comics]

Formerly GHOST MANOR (1968–71) first series

v4#22 (Jan 1972) 20¢

v4#24 (Apr 1972) 20¢

v4#26 (Aug 1972) 20¢

v5#32 (May 1973) 20¢

v5#33 (Jul 1973) 20¢

v7#43 (Mar 1975) 25¢

v8#52 (Oct 1976) 30¢

GHOSTLY TALES

(1966–84) [Charlton Comics]
Cover title GHOSTLY TALES FROM THE

HAUNTED HOUSE

v2#58 (Nov 1966) 12¢
v3#59 (Jan 1967) 12¢
v3#60 (Mar 1967) 12¢
v3#61 (Jun 1967) 12¢
v3#62 (Aug 1967) 12¢
v3#63 (Oct 1967) 12¢
v4#65 (Feb 1968) 12¢
v4#66 (May 1968) 12¢
v4#67 (Jul 1968) 12¢
v4#68 (Sep 1968) 12¢
v4#70 (Nov 1968) 12¢
v4#72 (Mar 1969) 12¢
v4#73 (May 1969) 12¢
v4#75 (Sep 1969) 15¢
v5#80 (Jun 1970) 15¢
v5#81 (Aug 1970) 15¢
v5#82 (Oct 1970) 15¢
v5#83 (Dec 1970) 15¢

all new
visit
GHOST MANOR
if you DARE
CHARLTON COMICS
UK-TOP
AUG

CHARLTON COMICS
HAUNTED
NO. 9
DEC
20¢
BEWARE... HERE COMES... SHUTAN!
all new!

Left Ghost Manor V6#30 (August 1976) Charlton Comics
Right Haunted V2#9 (December 1972) Charlton Comics

v6#84 (Feb 1971) 15¢
v6#85 (Apr 1971) 15¢
v6#86 (Jun 1971) 15¢
v6#88 (Sep 1971) 15¢
v6#89 (Oct 1971) 20¢
v6#90 (Nov 1971) 20¢
v7#94 (Apr 1972) 20¢
v8#104 (May 1973) 20¢
v8#105 (Jul 1973) 20¢
v8#106 (Aug 1973) 20¢
v9#112 (Dec 1974) 25¢
v10#114 (Apr 1975) 25¢
v13#127 (Jan 1978) 35¢
v13#130 (May 1978) 35¢
v13#132 (Oct 1978) 35¢
v14#137 (Aug 1979) 40¢

GHOSTLY TALES FROM THE HAUNTED HOUSE see GHOSTLY TALES

HAUNTED

(1971–84) [Charlton Comics]
Cover title BARON WEIRWULF'S HAUNTED LIBRARY with v5#21

v1#2 (Nov 1971) 20¢
v2#4 (Feb 1972) 20¢
v2#7 (Aug 1972) 20¢
v2#8 (Oct 1972) 20¢
v2#9 (Dec 1972) 20¢
v3#13 (Jul 1973) 20¢
v3#14 (Sep 1973) 20¢
v4#17 (Jul 1974) 20¢
v4#19 (Dec 1974) 25¢
v5#21 (Apr 1975) 25¢
v6#28 (Jul 1976) 30¢
v8#37 (Jul 1978) 35¢
v9#41 (Mar 1979) 40¢
v9#43 (Jul 1979) 40¢

HAUNTED LOVE

(1973–75) [Charlton Comics]

v3#7 (Jan 1975) 25¢
v3#9 (May 1975) 25¢
v3#10 (Jun 1975) 25¢

THE MANY GHOSTS OF DOCTOR GRAVES

(1967–82) [Charlton Comics]

v1#1 (May 1967) 12¢
v1#2 (Jul 1967) 12¢
v1#3 (Sep 1967) 12¢
v1#4 (Nov 1967) 12¢
v1#5 (Jan 1968) 12¢
v1#6 (May 1968) 12¢
v1#7 (Jul 1968) 12¢
v1#8 (Aug 1968) 12¢
v1#10 (Nov 1968) 12¢
v2#21 (Aug 1970) 15¢
v2#23 (Dec 1970) 15¢
v3#25 (Apr 1971) 15¢
v4#32 (Jun 1972) 20¢
v4#35 (Dec 1972) 20¢
v6#48 (Nov 1974) 25¢
v7#51 (May 1975) 25¢
v7#52 (Jul 1975) 25¢
v8#58 (Aug 1976) 30¢

NIGHTMARE

(1970–75) [Skywald Publishing]

v1#6 (Dec 1971) 60¢

v1#22 (Nov 1974) 75¢

PSYCHO

(1971–75) [Skywald Publishing]
v1#6 (May 1972) 60¢

RED CIRCLE SORCERY

(1974–75) [Red Circle Productions]

v1#9 (Oct 1974) 25¢

v1#11 (Feb 1975) 25¢

SCARY TALES

(1975–84) [Charlton Comics]

v4#12 (Mar 1978) 35¢

v4#15 (Jul 1978) 35¢

SHADOWS FROM BEYOND

(1966) [Charlton Comics]

Formerly UNUSUAL TALES (1955–65)

v2#50 (Oct 1966) 12¢

STRANGE SUSPENSE STORIES

(1952–69) [Charlton Comics]

v3#1 (Oct 1967) 12¢

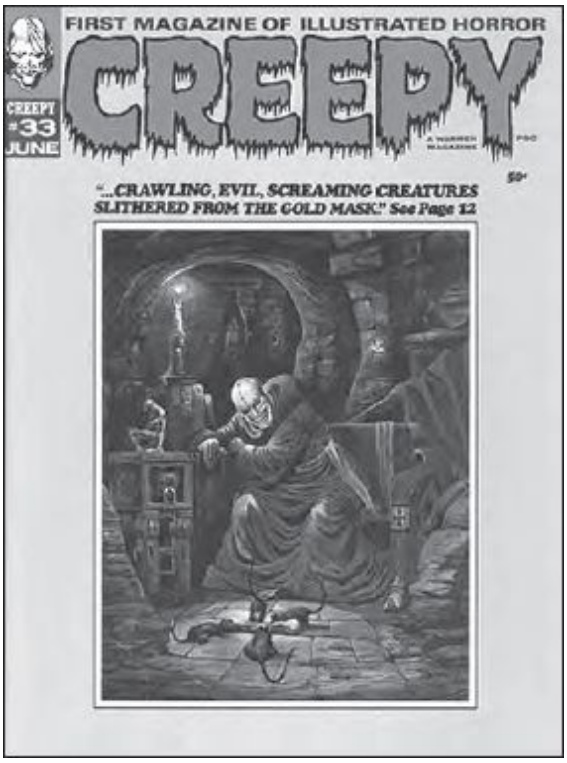
v1#2 (Jul 1968) 12¢

v1#3 (Sep 1968) 12¢

v1#6 (Mar 1969) 12¢

THE UNEXPECTED

(1968–82) [DC Comics]
Formerly TALES OF THE UNEXPECTED
(1956–68)
#112 (May 1969) 12¢
#113 (Jul 1969) 15¢
#116 (Jan 1970) 15¢
#162 (Apr 1975) 25¢


FIRST MAGAZINE OF ILLUSTRATED HORROR
CREEPY
CREEPY #33 JUNE
50¢
"...CRAWLING, EVIL, SCREAMING CREATURES SLITHERED FROM THE GOLD MASK." See Page 12

Creepy #33 (June 1970) Warren Publishing

VAMPIRELLA

(1969–83) [Warren Publishing]

#16 (Apr 1972) 75¢

VISIT GHOST MANOR see GHOST MANOR

WEIRD SUSPENSE

(1975) [Atlas Comics]

#1 (Feb 1975) 25¢

#2 (Apr 1975) 25¢

#3 (Jul 1975) 25¢

WEIRD TALES OF THE MACABRE

(1975) [Atlas Comics]

#1 (Jan 1975) 75¢

#2 (Mar 1975) 75¢

THE WITCHING HOUR

(1969–78) [DC Comics]

#1 (Mar 1969) 12¢

#4 (Sep 1969) 15¢

#5 (Nov 1969) 15¢

#38 (Jan 1974) 20¢

Above Eerie #28 (July 1970) Warren Publishing

Below An unwary devil worshipper discovers just how expendable he really is in “Satan Is Free” from The Many Ghosts of Dr. Graves V7#52 (July 1975) Charlton Comics

WHY, MASTER.. WHY DID YOU NEVER HELP ME?
YOU GAVE ME WORDS, LUCIAN COBB.. WHEN YOU KNEW WHAT I REQUIRED...
... A HUMAN SACRIFICE!
HAHAH
The END

.....

Bruce Elliot Jones (1946–) *aka Bruce Elliot, Philip Roland*

selected horror magazine checklist (1968–79)

.....

ABYSS

(1970) [Abyss Publications]

#1 (Nov 1970) $2.00

COMIX INTERNATIONAL

(1974–77) [Warren Publishing]

#5 (Spring 1977) $1.98

Mail order only through Captain Company

CREEPY

(1964–83) [Warren Publishing]

#41 (Sep 1971) 60¢
#63 (Jul 1974) $1.00
#77 (Feb 1976) $1.25
#79 (May 1976) $1.00
#83 (Oct 1976) $1.50
#85 (Jan 1977) $1.25
#86 (Feb 1977) $1.50
#87 (Mar 1977) $1.25
#88 (May 1977) $1.25
#89 (Jun 1977) $1.25
#90 (Jul 1977) $1.25
#92 (Oct 1977) $1.75
#95 (Feb 1978) $1.50
#96 (Mar 1978) $1.25
#97 (May 1978) $1.25
#98 (Jun 1978) $1.25
#100 (Aug 1978) $1.75
#101 (Sep 1978) $1.50
#102 (Oct 1978) $1.75
#105 (Feb 1979) $1.50
#107 (May 1979) $1.50
#109 (Jul 1979) $1.50
#113 (Nov 1979) $1.50

EERIE

(1965–83) [Warren Publishing]

#16 (Jul 1968) 40¢
#23 (Sep 1969) 50¢
#36 (Nov 1971) 60¢
#77 (Sep 1976) $1.25
#79 (Nov 1976) $1.25
#80 (Jan 1977) $1.25
#81 (Feb 1977) $1.50
#87 (Oct 1977) $1.75
#88 (Nov 1977) $1.25
#89 (Jan 1978) $1.25
#90 (Feb 1978) $1.50
#91 (Mar 1978) $1.25
#95 (Sep 1978) $1.50
#97 (Nov 1978) $1.25
#98 (Jan 1978) $1.25
#99 (Feb 1979) $1.50
#104 (Sep 1979) $1.75
#105 (Oct 1979) $2.00
#107 (Dec 1979) $1.35

FUTURE COMIX

(1978) [Warren Publishing]

#1 (Sep 1978) $1.50

THE MONSTER TIMES

(1972–76) [The Monster Times Publishing Company]

v1#14 (Jul 31, 1972) 50¢

NIGHTMARE

(1970–75) [Skywald Publishing]

v1#3 (Apr 1971) 50¢

v1#8 (Aug 1972) 60¢

v1#14 (Aug 1973) 75¢

Annual #1 (1972) 75¢

Cover title NIGHTMARE 1972 ANNUAL

1974 Yearbook (1974) 75¢

PSYCHO

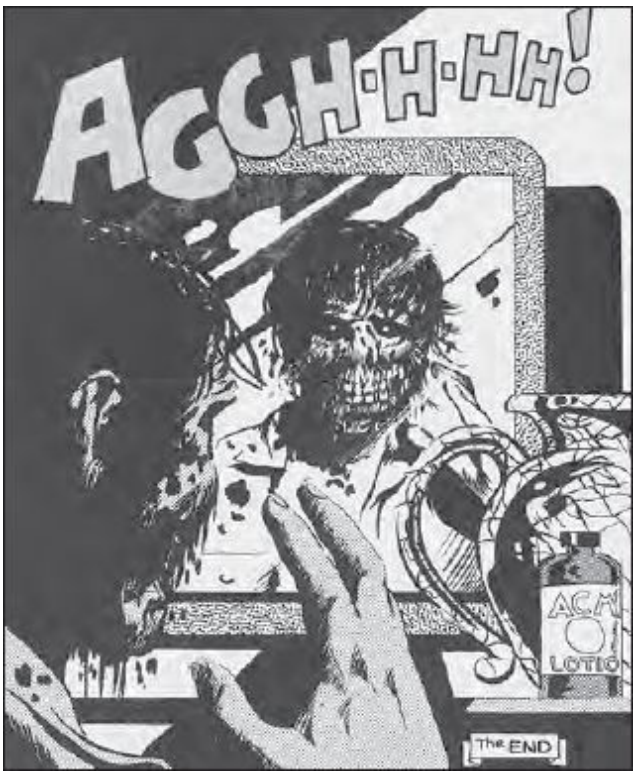
(1971–75) [Skywald Publishing]
v1#4 (Sep 1971) 50¢

VAMPIRELLA

(1969–83) [Warren Publishing]

#53 (Aug 1976) $1.00

#56 (Dec 1976) $1.25



Bruce Jones' grisly punchline from "A Rottin' Deal." Nightmare 1974 Yearbook **(1974) Skywald Publishing**

#57 (Jan 1977) $1.25

#58 (Mar 1977) $1.50

#60 (May 1977) $1.25

#61 (Jul 1977) $1.25

#62 (Aug 1977) $1.25

#63 (Sep 1977) $1.50

#65 (Dec 1977) $1.25

#66 (Jan 1978) $1.25

#68 (Apr 1978) $1.25
#69 (May 1978) $1.25
#71 (Aug 1978) $1.25
#76 (Mar 1979) $1.50
#78 (May 1979) $1.75
#80 (Aug 1979) $2.00
#82 (Oct 1979) $2.00
#83 (Dec 1979) $1.50

WEB OF HORROR

(1969–70) [Major Magazines]

#3 (Apr 1970) 35¢

HE JUST STOOD THERE POINTING DOWN RIVER, BECKONING ME TO GO...TO ABANDON HIM..."
LOOK, I AIN'T LEAVING WITHOUT YOU SO YOU MIGHT AS WELL..
WHAT'RE YOU DO--
AAAAGHHHHH!
WHAT HAPPENED? WHY DID YOU SCREAM?
HE--HEH-HEH... HE TOOK IT OFF... HEH-HEH... HE TOOK THE BLOODY THING OFF! HA-HA-HA-HA-HA-HA-HA-HA!
APGGHH!

Bruce Jones and and Berni Wrightson monkey around in the shocker “The Laughing Man.” Creepy #95 (February 1978) Warren Publishing

.....

The Haunt of Horror digest index (1973)

.....

THE HAUNT OF HORROR v1#1

(Jun 1973)

Marvel Comics Group / 160 pages / 75 ¢

Publisher: Stan Lee

Editor: Gerard Conway
Associate Editor: George Alec Effinger
Consulting Editor: Roy Thomas
Production: Sal Brodsky
♦ Cover Illustration by Gray Morrow
♦ The Unspoken Invitation by Gerard Conway [Editorial]
♦ Conjure Wife (Part One) by Fritz Leiber [Serial] Illustrated by Eugene Colan
♦ The First Step by John K Diomede [Novelette] Illustrated by Frank Brunner
♦ Ghost in the Corn Crib by RA Lafferty [Short story] Illustrated by Dan Green
♦ Loup Garou by AA Attanasio [Short story] Illustrated by Michael Ploog
♦ Neon by Harlan Ellison [Short story] Illustrated by Walter Simonson
♦ A Nice Home by Beverly Goldberg [Short story] Illustrated by "TW"
♦ Night Beat by Ramsey Campbell [Short story] Uncredited illustration
♦ Seeing Stingy Ed by David Bunch [Short story]
♦ Usurp the Night by Robert E Howard [Short story] Uncredited illustration
♦ Lurker in the Family Room by Dennis O'Neil [Article]
♦ Boo Kreviews by Baird Searles [Book reviews] Uncredited illustration

THE HAUNT OF HORROR v1#2
(Aug 1973)
Marvel Comics Group / 160 pages / 75¢ Publisher: Stan Lee
Editor: Gerard Conway
Associate Editor: Len Wein
Assistant Editor: George Alec Effinger
Consulting Editor: Roy Thomas
Production: Sal Brodsky
♦ Cover Illustration by Frank Kelly Freas
♦ Conditional Terror by Gerard Conway [Editorial] Illustrated by Walt Simonson
♦ Conjure Wife (Part One) by Fritz Leiber [Serial] Illustrated by Walt Simonson
♦ The Jewel in the Ash by George Alec Effinger aka John K Diomede [Novelette] Illustrated by Walt Simonson
♦ Devil Night by Dennis O'Neil [Short story] Illustrated by John Buscema
♦ Finders Keepers by Anne McCaffery [Short story] Illustrated by Billy Graham
♦ Kilbride by Ron Goulart [Short story] Illustrated by Frank Brunner
♦ Mono No Aware by Howard Waldrop [Short story] Uncredited illustration
♦ Neon by Harlan Ellison [Short story] Illustrated by Frank Kelly Freas
♦ Pelican's Claws by Arthur Byron Cover [Short story] Illustrated by Dan Green
♦ Digging Up Atlantis by Lin Carter [Article] Uncredited illustration

.....

Marvel monster magazine checklist (1964–79)

.....

DRACULA LIVES!

(1973–75)

v1#1 (1973) 75¢
v1#2 (1973) 75¢
v1#3 (Oct 1973) 75¢
v1#4 (Jan 1974) 75¢
v1#5 (Mar 1974) 75¢ / Listed in indicia as v2#1
v1#6 (May 1974) 75¢
v1#7 (Jul 1974) 75¢
v1#8 (Sep 1974) 75¢
v1#9 (Nov 1974) 75¢
v1#10 (Jan 1975) 75¢
v1#11 (Mar 1975) 75¢
v1#12 (May 1975) 75¢
v1#13 (Jul 1975) 75¢
Annual #1 (Summer 1975) $1.25

THE HAUNT OF HORROR

(1974–75)

v1#1 (May 1974) 75¢

v1#2 (Jul 1974) 75¢

v1#3 (Sep 1974) 75¢

v1#4 (Nov 1974) 75¢

v1#5 (Jan 1975) 75¢

THE LEGION OF MONSTERS

(1975)

v1#1 (Sep 1975) $1.00

MARVEL PREVIEW

(1975–80)

v1#3 (Sep 1975) $1.00

Cover title BLADE, THE VAMPIRE SLAYER

v1#8 (Fall 1976) $1.00

Cover title LEGION OF MONSTERS

v1#12 (Fall 1977) $1.00

Cover title THE HAUNT OF HORROR

v1#16 (Fall 1978) $1.00

Cover title MASTERS OF TERROR

MASTERS OF TERROR

(1975)

v1#1 (Jul 1975) $1.00

v1#2 (Sep 1975) $1.00

MONSTER MADNESS

(1972–73)

v1#1 (1972) 60¢

v1#2 (1973) 60¢

v1#3 (1973) 60¢

MONSTERS OF THE MOVIES

(1974–75)

v1#1 (Jun 1974) $1.00

v1#2 (Aug 1974) $1.00

v1#3 (Oct 1974) $1.00

v1#4 (Dec 1974) $1.00

v1#5 (Feb 1975) $1.00

v1#6 (Apr 1975) $1.00

v1#7 (Jun 1975) $1.00

v1#8 (Aug 1975) $1.00

Annual #1 (Summer 1975) $1.25 / Listed in indicia as v1#9

MONSTERS TO LAUGH WITH

(1964–65)

Becomes MONSTERS UNLIMITED with v1#4

v1#1 (1964) 25¢

v1#2 (1965) 25¢

v1#3 (1965) 25¢

MONSTERS UNLEASHED!

(1973–75)

v1#1 (1973) 75¢

v1#2 (Sep 1973) 75¢

v1#3 (Nov 1973) 75¢

v1#4 (Feb 1974) 75¢

v1#5 (Apr 1974) 75¢

v1#6 (Jun 1974) 75¢

v1#7 (Aug 1974) 75¢

v1#8 (Oct 1974) 75¢

v1#9 (Dec 1974) 75¢

v1#10 (Feb 1975) 75¢

v1#11 (Apr 1975) 75¢

Annual #1 (Summer 1975) $1.25

MONSTERS UNLIMITED

(1965–66)

Formerly MONSTERS TO LAUGH WITH

(1964–65)

v1#4 (1965) 25¢

v1#5 (1965) 25¢

v1#6 (1966) 25¢

v1#7 (1966) 25¢

TALES OF THE ZOMBIE

(1973–75)

v1#1 (1973) 75¢

v1#2 (Oct 1973) 75¢

v1#3 (Jan 1973) 75¢

v1#4 (Mar 1974) 75¢ / Listed in indicia as v2#1

v1#5 (May 1974) 75¢

v1#6 (Jul 1974) 75¢

v1#7 (Sep 1974) 75¢

v1#8 (Nov 1974) 75¢

v1#9 (Jan 1975) 75¢

v1#10 (Mar 1975) 75¢

Annual #1 (Summer 1975) $1.25

VAMPIRE TALES

(1973–75)

v1#1 (1973) 75¢
v1#2 (Oct 1973) 75¢
v1#3 (Feb 1974) 75¢
v1#4 (Apr 1974) 75¢
v1#5 (Jun 1974) 75¢
v1#6 (Aug 1974) 75¢
v1#7 (Oct 1974) 75¢
v1#8 (Dec 1974) 75¢
v1#9 (Feb 1975) 75¢
v1#10 (Apr 1975) 75¢
v1#11 (Jun 1975) 75¢
Annual #1 (Summer 1975) $1.25

.....

Marvel monster magazine artist & writer index (1964–79)

.....

ADAMS, NEAL (1941–)

♦ *Dracula Lives!* 2–3, Annual 1
♦ *The Haunt of Horror* 4
♦ *The Legion of Monsters* 1
♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 3

ADKINS, DANIEL 'DAN' (1937–)

♦ *The Legion of Monsters* 1
♦ *Masters of Terror* 1–2
♦ *Monsters of the Movies 1*

ALBANO, JOHN

♦ *Tales of the Zombie* 4

ALCALA, ALFREDO P (1925–2000)

♦ *Dracula Lives!* 9

♦ *The Haunt of Horror* 1
♦ *Tales of the Zombie* 7–9, Annual 1
♦ *Vampire Tales* 6, 8–10, Annual 1

ALCAZAR, VICENTE (1944–)
♦ *The Haunt of Horror* 1
♦ *Marvel Preview* 8
♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 5, 7, Annual 1
♦ *Tales of the Zombie* 3, 10, Annual 1
♦ *Vampire Tales* 6

AMONGO, MAR
♦ *Monsters of the Movies 6*

ASHERMAN, ALLEN (1947–)
♦ *Monster Madness* 3

AYERS, RICHARD 'DICK' (1924–)
♦ *Dracula Lives!* 4
♦ *Tales of the Zombie* 1, 5

BADIA, ENRIQUE see ROMERO, ENRIQUE BADIA

BALCELLS

♦ *Vampire Tales* 6

BALD, KENNETH ‘KEN’ (1920–)

♦ *Dracula Lives!* 12

♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* Annual 1

BANKS, MANNIE

♦ *Vampire Tales* 2

BARR, KENNETH ‘KEN’ (1933–)

♦ *Marvel Preview* 8

BERNET, JORDI (1944–)

♦ *Vampire Tales* 1

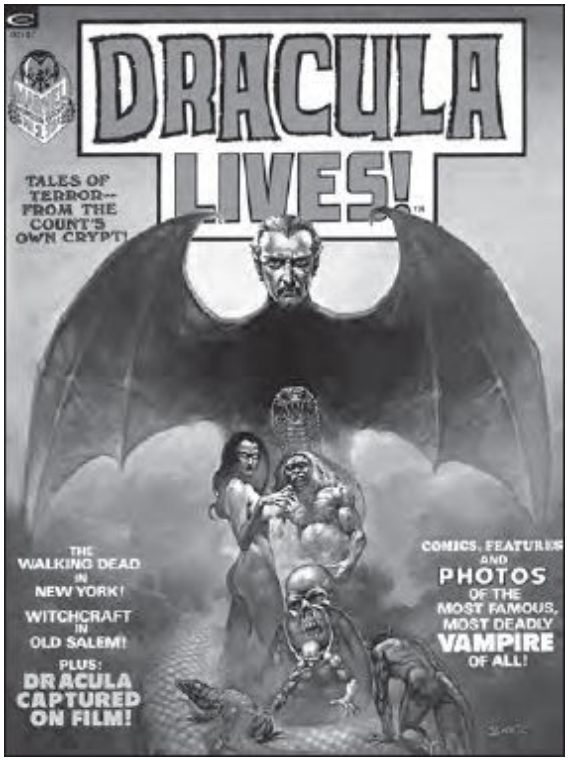
BLAISDELL, PAUL

♦ *Monsters of the Movies* Annual 1

BLASCO, JÉSUS (1919–95)

♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 2, Annual 1

♦ *Vampire Tales* 2, 9


DRACULA LIVES!
TALES OF TERROR--FROM THE COUNT'S OWN CRYPT!
THE WALKING DEAD IN NEW YORK!
WITCHCRAFT IN OLD SALEM!
PLUS: DRACULA CAPTURED ON FILM!
COMICS, FEATURES AND PHOTOS OF THE MOST FAMOUS, MOST DEADLY VAMPIRE OF ALL!

NEW AND NEFARIOUS! FEAR-FILLED PREMIERE ISSUE!
MAY
75¢
THE HAUNT OF HORROR
"HIS OWN KIND"
A SHOCK-STUDDED WEREWOLF
TALE BY FANTASY MASTER
THOMAS M. DISCH
PHOTOS, FEATURES, and ILLUSTRATED STORIES of TERROR and the SUPERNATURAL

Left Cover art by Boris Vallejo for Dracula Lives! V1#1 (1973) Marvel Comics Group

Right Cover art by Bob Larkin for Haunt of Horror V1#1 (May 1974) Marvel Comics Group

BLOCH, ROBERT (1917–94)

♦ *Masters of Terror* 1–2

♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 1

BOIX, JUAN (1945–)

♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 5, Annual 1

BOUDREAU, GERRY (1951–)

♦ *Dracula Lives!* 4, 9

♦ *Tales of the Zombie* 6

♦ *Vampire Tales* 6

BRAVERMAN, JUNE

♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 6

BRODERICK, PATRICK 'PAT'

♦ *The Haunt of Horror* 3–4

♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 7, 9

♦ *Tales of the Zombie* 7

BROWN, ROBERT 'BOB' (1915–77)

♦ *Dracula Lives!* 10–11

♦ *Marvel Preview* 12

♦ *Vampire Tales* 6

BRUNNER, FRANK (1949–)

♦ *Masters of Terror 1*

♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 2, 5, 11

BUCKLER, RICHARD 'RICH' (1949–)

♦ *Dracula Lives!* 1

♦ *Tales of the Zombie* 4
♦ *Vampire Tales* 2–3, 5, Annual 1

BUSCEMA, JOHN (1927–2002)
♦ *Dracula Lives!* 3, 6, Annual 1
♦ *Marvel Preview* 12, 16
♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 2, 4–5
♦ *Tales of the Zombie* 1, Annual 1

CARTER, LIN (1930–88)
♦ *Tales of the Zombie* 4

CHAN, ERNIE (1940–)
♦ *Marvel Preview* 12

CHAYKIN, HOWARD (1950–)
♦ *Vampire Tales 7*

CHIARAMONTE, FRANK
♦ *Dracula Lives!* 11

Cover art by Earl Norem for Marvel Preview V1#12 (Fall 1977) Marvel Comics Group

♦ *The Haunt of Horror 2*
♦ *Tales of the Zombie* 6
♦ *Vampire Tales* 8

CHUA, ERNIE (1940–)
♦ *Dracula Lives!* 4, 6–9, Annual 1
♦ *The Haunt of Horror* 1
♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 6–7, Annual 1
♦ *Tales of the Zombie* 4
♦ *Vampire Tales* 4–5, 8, Annual 1

CLAREMONT, CHRIS (1950–)
♦ *Dracula Lives!* 2–5, 8
♦ *The Haunt of Horror* 2, 4–5
♦ *Marvel Preview 3*
♦ *Monster Madness 3*
♦ *Monsters of the Movies* 8, Annual 1
♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 3–4, 9–10, Annual 1
♦ *Tales of the Zombie* 2,–3, 5–9
♦ *Vampire Tales* 1–4, 6, 9

COCKRUM, DAVID 'DAVE' (1943–)
♦ *The Legion of Monsters* 1
♦ *Marvel Preview* 8
♦ *Monster Madness 3*
♦ *Monsters of the Movies* 1
♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 4, 11

COLAN, 'GENE' EUGENE (1926–)
♦ *Dracula Lives!* 1–2, 5–6, 8
♦ *The Haunt of Horror 2*
♦ *Marvel Preview* 3, 8, 16
♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 1, 4, Annual 1
♦ *Tales of the Zombie* 2, 5–6

♦ *Vampire Tales 2*

CONWAY, CARLA

♦ *Vampire Tales* 8–9

CONWAY, GERALD ‘GERRY’ (1952–)

♦ *Dracula Lives!* 1, 3–5, 7, 9, 12–13, Annual 1

♦ *The Haunt of Horror* 1–2, 4

♦ *The Legion of Monsters* 1

♦ *Masters of Terror 2*

♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 1–3, 5–7, 11, Annual 1

♦ *Tales of the Zombie* 4, 10

♦ *Vampire Tales* 3–4, 8–10, Annual 1

CRAIG, JOHN ‘JOHNNY’ (1926–2001)

♦ *Masters of Terror 2*

THE CRUSTY BUNKERS

♦ *Dracula Lives!* 3, 10, Annual 1
♦ *The Haunt of Horror* 4
♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 3, Annual 1

DAVIS, JACK (1924–)
♦ *Monsters Unleashed! 3*

DE ZUÑIGA, ANTHONY 'TONY' (1950–)
♦ *Dracula Lives! 8*, 10–11, 13
♦ *Marvel Preview* 3, 16
♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 10
♦ *Tales of the Zombie* 10
♦ *Vampire Tales* 8–9

DERLETH, AUGUST (1909–71)
♦ *Masters of Terror 1*
♦ *Vampire Tales* 3–4

DI PRETA, ANTHONY 'TONY' (1921–)
♦ *Dracula Lives!* 1
♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 1
♦ *Tales of the Zombie 3*
♦ *Vampire Tales* 4

DISCH, THOMAS M (1940–)
♦ *Masters of Terror 2*
♦ *Monsters Unleashed! 2*

DOMINGUEZ, LUIS
♦ *Dracula Lives!* 5–10
♦ *Monsters of the Movies* 1, 6
♦ *Vampire Tales 3*

DREYFACK, KENNETH
♦ *Tales of the Zombie 7*

DUNN, DENNIS

♦ *Monsters of the Movies 7*

EDELMAN, SCOTT (1955–)

♦ *Marvel Preview* 3

♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 11

EFFINGER, GEORGE ALEC (1947–2002)

♦ *The Haunt of Horror* 1

ESPOSITO, MICHAEL 'MIKE' (1927–)

♦ *Dracula Lives!* 8–9

♦ *The Haunt of Horror* 1, 3

♦ *Tales of the Zombie* 5, 8

EVANIER, MARK (1952–)

♦ *Vampire Tales* 1

EVANS, GEORGE (1920–2001)

♦ *Dracula Lives! 7*

♦ *The Haunt of Horror* 5

EVERETT, WILLIAM 'BILL' (1917–73)

♦ *Monsters Unleashed! 2*

♦ *Tales of the Zombie* 1, Annual 1

♦ *Vampire Tales* 1

FABIAN, STEPHEN E (1930–)

♦ *Dracula Lives!* 11

FONT, ALFONSO (1946–)

♦ *Dracula Lives!* 3

♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 6

FOX, GARDNER F (1911–)

♦ *Dracula Lives!* 4

♦ *Masters of Terror* 1

♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 1, Annual 1

♦ *Vampire Tales* 1–2

FREIXAS, CARLOS ‘CARLO’ (1923–2003)

♦ *Monsters Unleashed! 6–7*

FRIEDRICH, GARY

♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 2, 4–5

FRIEDRICH, MICHAEL ‘MIKE’

♦ *Dracula Lives! 7*

GAN, STEVE

♦ *Dracula Lives!* 12–13

♦ *Tales of the Zombie* 9

Cover art by Jim Steranko for Masters of Terror V1#1 (July 1975) Marvel Comics Group

GARZÓN, CARLOS (1945–)

♦ *Vampire Tales* 2, Annual 1

GELB, JEFF

♦ *Monsters of the Movies* Annual 1

GERANI, GARY

♦ *Dracula Lives!* 10

♦ *Monster Madness* 3

GERBER, STEVEN 'STEVE' (1947–)

♦ *Dracula Lives!* 1–2, 6, 10–11

♦ *The Haunt of Horror* 1

♦ *Marvel Preview* 12, 16

♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 4, 9

♦ *Tales of the Zombie* 1–8, Annual 1

♦ *Vampire Tales* 1

GIACOIA, FRANK (1925–89)

♦ *The Haunt of Horror* 3

♦ *Masters of Terror 1*

♦ *Tales of the Zombie* 8

♦ *Vampire Tales* 5

GIORDANO, RICHARD 'DICK' (1932–)

♦ *Dracula Lives!* 1–2, 5–8, 10–11

♦ *The Haunt of Horror* 5

Cover art for Monster Madness V1#3 (1973) Marvel Comics Group

♦ *The Legion of Monsters* 1
♦ *Vampire Tales* 5

GLUT, DONALD F (1944–)

♦ *Monsters of the Movies* 1–2, 4, 6, 8, Annual 1
♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 5
♦ *Vampire Tales* 5

GOLD, ALAN

♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 6–7

GOULART, RON (1933–)

♦ *Marvel Preview* 16
♦ *Masters of Terror* 1–2
♦ *Vampire Tales* 1

GRAHAM, WILLIAM 'BILLY'

♦ *The Haunt of Horror* 2–3

♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 11
♦ *Vampire Tales 7*

GRAINGER, SAM
♦ *The Legion of Monsters* 1

GREEN, DANIEL 'DAN'
♦ *Tales of the Zombie 7*

GULACY, PAUL
♦ *Dracula Lives!* 8–9
♦ *Vampire Tales* 7, 10

HALL, BOB
♦ *Dracula Lives!* 11

HARMON, JIM (1933–)
♦ *Monsters of the Movies* 1–2, 4, 6, 8, Annual 1
♦ *Tales of the Zombie* 6

HARRISON, MIKE
♦ *Monsters of the Movies* Annual 1

HAYDOCK, RON (1940–77)
♦ *Monsters of the Movies* 1–2, 4, 6, 8, Annual 1

HEATH, RUSSELL 'RUSS' (1926–)
♦ *Dracula Lives!* 1, 13
♦ *The Haunt of Horror* 1
♦ *Tales of the Zombie* 5
♦ *Vampire Tales* 9, Annual 1

HESCOX, RICHARD
♦ *Monsters Unleashed! 7*
♦ *Vampire Tales* 10–11

HEWETSON, ALAN
♦ *Monsters of the Movies 2*

HODGE, PAUL

♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 5

HOFFMAN, ERIC L

♦ *Monsters of the Movies* 1–2, 4, 8, Annual 1

HOWARD, ROBERT E (1906–36)

♦ *Masters of Terror* 1–2

♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 1

HOWARD, WAYNE (1949–)

♦ *The Haunt of Horror* 4

IBAÑEZ, VICENTE

♦ *Vampire Tales* 3

INFANTINO, CARMINE (1925–)

♦ *Vampire Tales* 3

ISABELLA, TONY (1951–)

♦ *Dracula Lives!* 2, 5–7, 9, 13, Annual 1

♦ *The Haunt of Horror* 4

♦ *The Legion of Monsters* 1

♦ *Masters of Terror 1*

♦ *Monster Madness* 3

♦ *Monsters of the Movies* 2, 6

♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 1–7, 9–10, Annual 1

♦ *Tales of the Zombie* 1–5, 8–9, Annual 1

♦ *Vampire Tales* 3–4, 8, Annual 1

JACKSON, HEATHER

♦ *Monsters of the Movies* 4

JAD

♦ *The Haunt of Horror* 3
♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 10
♦ *Vampire Tales* 2, 7–8

JANSON, KLAUS (1952–)
♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 3, 7, Annual 1
♦ *Vampire Tales* 2–3, Annual 1

JOHNSON, HEATHER
♦ *Monsters of the Movies* 6

JONES, ARVIN
♦ *Monsters Unleashed! 9*

JONES, RUSSELL 'RUSS'
♦ *Marvel Preview* 8
♦ *Monsters of the Movies* 7–8
♦ *Vampire Tales* 3

JOSEPH, CARLA
♦ *Dracula Lives!* 5, 7–8
♦ *Monsters of the Movies* 1–2, Annual 1
♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 3, 5–7
♦ *Tales of the Zombie* 6
♦ *Vampire Tales* 3, 5–7

KALUTA, MICHAEL WILLIAM (1947–
♦ *Marvel Preview* 12
♦ *Tales of the Zombie* 8

KANE, GIL (1926–2000) Born Eli *Katz*
♦ *Masters of Terror* 1–2
♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 3, Annual 1
♦ *Vampire Tales* 5

KIDA, FREDERICK ‘FRED’ (1920–)

♦ *Dracula Lives! 2*

KIM, SAN-HO ‘SANHO’ (1939–)

♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 10

KIRCHNER, PAUL (1952–)

♦ *The Haunt of Horror* 5

♦ *The Legion of Monsters* 1

KRAFT, DAVID ANTHONY (1952–)

♦ *The Haunt of Horror* 5

♦ *Marvel Preview* 12

♦ *Tales of the Zombie* 8

MONSTERS
UNLEASHED!
THE MONSTER OF FRANKENSTEIN
WITHIN THIS ISSUE LURK... THE ROACHES
PLUS: A GHOUL'S GALLEY OF PHOTOS AND FEATURES TO HAUNT AND TO HORRIFY!

Cover art by Boris Vallejo for Monsters Unleashed! V1#2 (September 1972)
Marvel Comics Group

KRIGSTEIN, BERNARD (1919–90)

♦ *The Haunt of Horror* 3

KUPPERBERG, ALAN

♦ *Vampire Tales* 5

LARKIN, ROBERT ‘BOB’

♦ *The Haunt of Horror* 1, 4

♦ *Monsters of the Movies* 2, 4, 8

♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 5

♦ *Vampire Tales* Annual 1

LEE, CHRISTOPHER (1922–)

♦ *Monsters of the Movies 7*

LEE, STAN (1922–)

♦ *Dracula Lives!* 1–2

♦ *Monster Madness* 1–3

♦ *Monsters of the Movies* 1

♦ *Monsters Unleashed! 2*

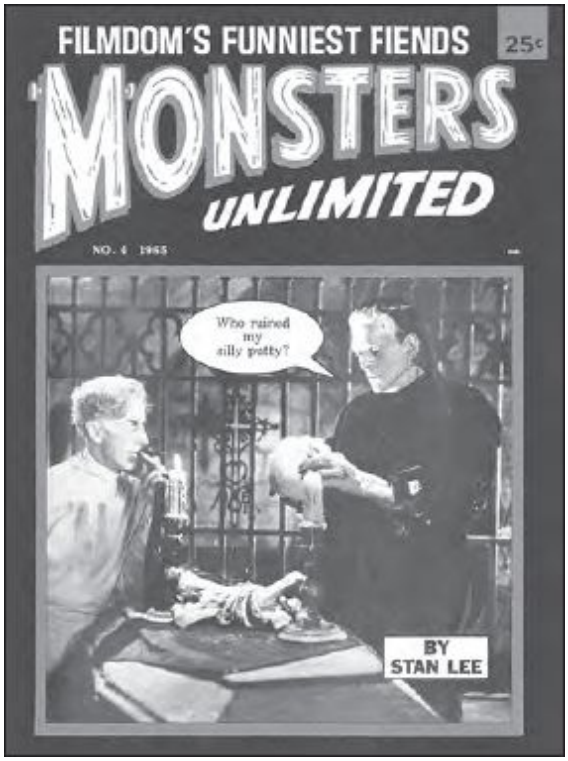
♦ Monsters Unlimited 4–7

♦ *Tales of the Zombie* 1–2, Annual 1

♦ *Vampire Tales* 3

LIEBER, LAWRENCE ‘LARRY’ (1931–

♦ *The Haunt of Horror* 3



Left Cover art for Monsters Unlimited V1#4 (1965) Marvel Comics Group

Right Cover art for Monsters Unlimited V1#5 (1965) Marvel Comics Group

♦ *Tales of the Zombie* 8
♦ *Vampire Tales* 9

LIJAUCO, PETE
♦ *The Legion of Monsters* 1
♦ *Vampire Tales* 11

LOMBARDIA

♦ *Vampire Tales* 4

LOVECRAFT, HOWARD PHILLIPS (1890–1937)
♦ *Masters of Terror* 1–2

MACCHIO, RALPH
♦ *Marvel Preview* 8

MAITZ, DON
♦ *Dracula Lives!* 10

MANEELY, JOSEPH 'JOE' (1926–58)
♦ *Dracula Lives!* 4

MARCOS, PABLO (1937–)
♦ *Dracula Lives!* 1, 5–6, 8, 11, Annual 1
♦ *The Haunt of Horror* 3, 5
♦ *The Legion of Monsters* 1
♦ *Marvel Preview* 12
♦ *Masters of Terror 2*
♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 1, 4, 10, Annual 1
♦ *Tales of the Zombie* 1–9
♦ *Vampire Tales* 1–3, 6, Annual 1

MARGOPOLOUS, RICHARD 'RICK'
♦ *Dracula Lives!* 13

MAROTO, ESTEBAN (1942–)
♦ *Masters of Terror 1*
♦ *Vampire Tales* 1, 3–5, Annual 1

MARSCHALL, RICHARD
♦ *Marvel Preview* 16

MARTIN, VIC

♦ *Tales of the Zombie* 4

MAYERIK, VAL

♦ *Dracula Lives!* 5

♦ *The Haunt of Horror* 1

♦ *The Legion of Monsters* 1

♦ *Marvel Preview* 8

♦ *Masters of Terror 2*

♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 6–7, 9–10

♦ *Vampire Tales* 5, Annual 1

MCGREGOR, DONALD F

♦ *Marvel Preview* 8

♦ *Monster Madness 3*

♦ *Monsters of the Movies* 7, Annual 1

♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 5, 11, Annual 1

♦ *Tales of the Zombie* 3–4

♦ *Vampire Tales* 2–5, *7–8,* Annual 1

MILGROM, ALLEN 'AL'

♦ *The Haunt of Horror* 3

♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 9

MOENCH, DOUGLAS 'DOUG' (1948–)

♦ *Dracula Lives!* 3, 5–6, 8–12

♦ *The Haunt of Horror* 2–5

♦ *The Legion of Monsters* 1

♦ *Marvel Preview* 8, 12

♦ *Monsters of the Movies* 1, 8, Annual 1

♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 6–7, 9–11

♦ *Tales of the Zombie* 3–7, 9–10, Annual 1

♦ *Vampire Tales* 2, 4–7, 9–11, Annual 1

MONTAÑO, YONG

♦ *Dracula Lives!* 12

♦ *The Haunt of Horror* 4

♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 9

♦ *Tales of the Zombie* 9
♦ *Vampire Tales* 11

MORROW, GRAY (1934–2001)
♦ *Dracula Lives!* Annual 1
♦ *The Legion of Monsters* 1
♦ *Marvel Preview* 3
♦ *Masters of Terror* 1
♦ *Monsters of the Movies* Annual 1
♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 1, 3

MORTELLARO, TONY
♦ *Dracula Lives!* 4

MORTIMER, WINSLOW 'WIN' (1919–97)
♦ *Dracula Lives!* 11
♦ *The Haunt of Horror* 3
♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 3–5
♦ *Tales of the Zombie* 2, 4, 7, 9
♦ *Vampire Tales* 1, 5

MUNSHOWER, SUSAN
♦ *Monsters of the Movies* Annual 1

NEBRES, RUDY
♦ *The Haunt of Horror* 5
♦ *Tales of the Zombie* 10

NOREM, EARL
♦ *Dracula Lives!* 4, 13
♦ *The Haunt of Horror 2*

Man-Thing spot illustration by Pat Broderick

♦ *Marvel Preview* 12
♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 9
♦ *Tales of the Zombie* 5–10 , Annual 1

NOSTRAND, HOWARD (1929–84)
♦ *Vampire Tales* 10

O'BRIEN, RICHARD (1934–)
♦ *Monsters of the Movies 2*

O'ROURKE, THOMPSON
♦ *Dracula Lives!* 6, 7

PAKULA, MAC L.
♦ *Dracula Lives!* 6

PALMER, TOM (1942–)

♦ *Dracula Lives!* 1

♦ *Marvel Preview* 16

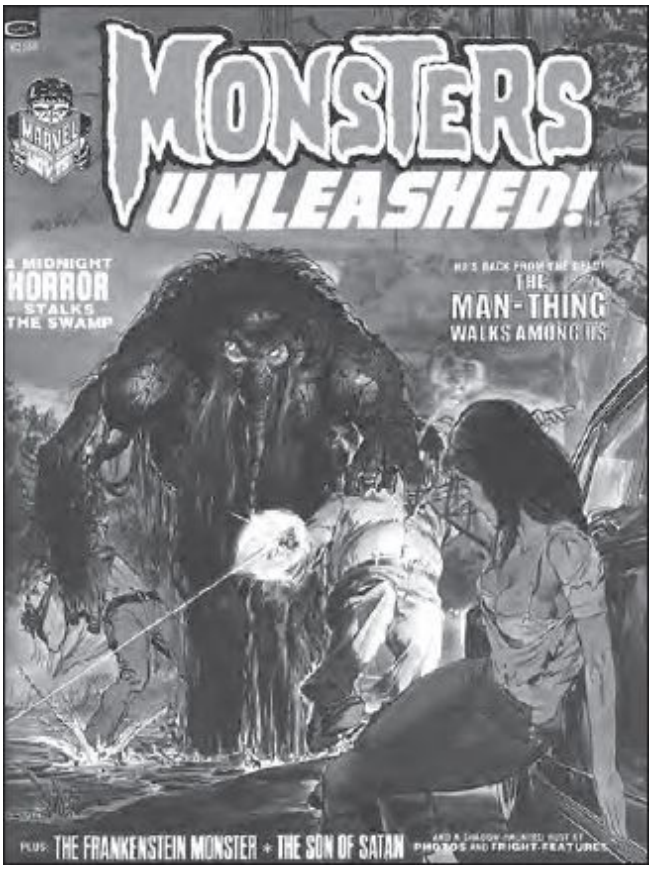
♦ *Masters of Terror* 1, 2

♦ *Tales of the Zombie* 1, Annual 1

♦ *Vampire Tales* 6

PANCHO, HERMOSO D

♦ *The Legion of Monsters* 1



Okay, so you tell me what's really on Manny's mind? Cover art by Neal Adams for Monsters Unleashed! V1#3 (November 1973) Marvel Comics Group

PASKO, MARTIN (1953–)

♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 2–4

PEARSON, KIT

♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 3

♦ *Tales of the Zombie* 1

PENALVA, JORDI

♦ *Dracula Lives! 2*

PEREZ, GEORGE (1954–)

♦ *Marvel Preview* 12

PERLIN, DON (1929–)

♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 4, 9, Annual 1

PLOOG, MICHAEL 'MIKE' (1942–)

♦ *Dracula Lives!* 4

♦ *Marvel Preview* 8

♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 6

PLUNKETT, SANDY

♦ *Marvel Preview* 8

POLIDORI, DR JOHN WILLIAM (1795–1821)

♦ *Vampire Tales* 1

REDONDO, VIRGILIO 'VIRGIL'

♦ *Dracula Lives!* 13

♦ *Tales of the Zombie* 9–10

REESE, RALPH

♦ *The Haunt of Horror* 1

♦ *The Legion of Monsters* 1

♦ *Masters of Terror* 1–2

♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 1–2

♦ *Tales of the Zombie* 2, Annual 1

♦ *Vampire Tales* 9

REINMAN, PAUL (1910–)

♦ *Vampire Tales* 1, 3–4

RIVAL, RICO

♦ *Marvel Preview* 3

♦ *Monsters of the Movies* 6

♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 11

ROBBINS, FRANK (1917–)

♦ *Dracula Lives!* 9

ROBINSON, CHARLES ‘CHUCK’

♦ *Tales of the Zombie* 2, Annual 1

ROMERO, ENRIQUE BADIA (1930–)

♦ *The Haunt of Horror* 2, 4

♦ *Tales of the Zombie* 3, Annual 1

ROMITA, JOHN, SR. (1930–)

♦ *Vampire Tales 2*

ROSEN, HY (1923–)

♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 6

ROYER, MICHAEL ‘MIKE’

♦ *Monsters of the Movies* 4

SATIAN, AL

♦ *Monsters of the Movies 2*, 4, 6

SEVERIN, MARIE

♦ *Marvel Preview* 8

♦ *Masters of Terror 1*

SHORES, SYDNEY ‘SYD’ (1916–73)

♦ *Dracula Lives!* 2–3, Annual 1

♦ *The Haunt of Horror* 4

♦ *Monsters of the Movies 2*

♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 1–2, 4

♦ *Tales of the Zombie* 1, 5, Annual 1

SIMONSON, WALTER ‘WALT’

♦ *The Haunt of Horror* 1

SINNOTT, JOSEPH ‘JOE’ (1926–)

♦ *Dracula Lives! 2*

SKEATES, STEVEN ‘STEVE’

♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 3, Annual 1

SMITH, BARRY see BARRY WINDSOR–SMITH

SPRINGER, FRANK (1929–)

♦ *Dracula Lives!* 5, 9, Annual 1

♦ *The Haunt of Horror* 3

♦ *Marvel Preview* 12

♦ *Tales of the Zombie* 5, Annual 1

STARLIN, JAMES ‘JIM’ (1949–)

♦ *Dracula Lives! 2*

♦ *Masters of Terror* 1

STATON, JOSEPH ‘JOE’ (1948–)

♦ *Vampire Tales* 8

STERANKO, JAMES ‘JIM’ (1938–)

♦ *Masters of Terror 2*

♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 4

♦ *Tales of the Zombie 2*

♦ *Vampire Tales 2*

STEWART, BHOB

♦ *Vampire Tales* 3

STOKER, BRAM (1879–1912)

♦ *Dracula Lives!* 5–7, 11

♦ *The Legion of Monsters* 1

STURGEON, THEODORE (1918–85)

Born Edward Hamilton Waldo

♦ *Masters of Terror* 1

SUTTON, THOMAS 'TOM' F (1937–2002)

♦ *Dracula Lives!* 12–13
♦ *Marvel Preview* 12
♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 3
♦ *Tales of the Zombie* 1, 10
♦ *Vampire Tales* 4, 7, Annual 1

THOMAS, ROY (1940–)

♦ *Dracula Lives!* 1–3, 5–8, 10–11, Annual 1
♦ *The Haunt of Horror* 1
♦ *The Legion of Monsters* 1
♦ *Masters of Terror* 1–2
♦ *Monsters of the Movies* 1
♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 1, 3, Annual 1
♦ *Tales of the Zombie* 1, Annual 1
♦ *Vampire Tales* 1–2, 5

THOMPSON, DON

♦ *The Legion of Monsters* 1
♦ *Masters of Terror* 1–2
♦ *Monsters of the Movies* 4

THOMPSON, MAGGIE

♦ *The Legion of Monsters* 1
♦ *Masters of Terror* 1–2
♦ *Monsters of the Movies* 4

TRIMPE, HERBERT 'HERB' (1939–)

♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 3

TRINIDAD, SONNY

♦ *Dracula Lives!* 9, 12
♦ *The Haunt of Horror* 4–5
♦ *Marvel Preview* 8, 12
♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 11
♦ *Vampire Tales* 10–11

TUSKA, GEORGE (1916–)

♦ *Dracula Lives!* 13
♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 3, Annual 1
♦ *Tales of the Zombie 2*

BORIS VALLEJO (1941–)
♦ *Dracula Lives!* 1
♦ *Monsters Unleashed! 2,* 6
♦ *Tales of the Zombie* 1–4
♦ *Vampire Tales* 4, 6

VERO

♦ *Monsters of the Movies* 7

VERPOORTEN, JOHN (1940–)

♦ *Masters of Terror 1*

VOHLAND, DUFFY

♦ *Dracula Lives!* 10

♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 9

♦ *Vampire Tales* 7, 10

VOSBURG, MICHAEL 'MIKE' (1947–

♦ *Vampire Tales* 8, 10

WALTON, BILL

♦ *Tales of the Zombie* 3

WARNER, JOHN DAVID (1952–)

♦ *Marvel Preview* 8

♦ *Tales of the Zombie* 10

♦ *Vampire Tales* 11

WASSERMAN, JEFFERY H

♦ *Monster Madness* 3

WEIN, LEN (1948–)

♦ *Dracula Lives!* 8

♦ *Tales of the Zombie 6*

WEISS, ALAN

♦ *Dracula Lives!* 1, 3, Annual 1

WELLS, HERBERT GEORGE 'H.G.' (1866–1946)

♦ *Masters of Terror 2*

WESSLER, CARL

♦ *Tales of the Zombie 7,* 10, Annual 1

WHITNEY, OGDEN

♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 5

WILDEY, ‘DOUGLAS’ DOUG (1922–94)

♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 1

WILLIAMSON, AL (1931–)

♦ *Monsters Unleashed! 7*

WILSON, RON

♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 5

♦ *Tales of the Zombie* 4, 8–9

WINDSOR-SMITH, BARRY (1949–)

♦ *Masters of Terror* 1

♦ *Monsters of the Movies 1*

WINTER, CHARLES A

♦ *Dracula Lives!* 3

WOLFMAN, ‘MARVIN’ MARV (1946–)

♦ *Dracula Lives!* 1–5, Annual 1

♦ *The Legion of Monsters* 1

♦ *Marvel Preview* 8, 16

♦ *Monsters Unleashed!* 1

♦ *Tales of the Zombie* 1

♦ *Vampire Tales* 6, 8–9

YOUNGER, JACK

♦ *The Haunt of Horror* 4

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Horror fiction digest checklist (1960–79)

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BIZARRE FANTASY TALES

(1970–71) [Acme Publishing/Health Knowledge, Inc.]

v1#1 (Fall 1970) 60¢

v1#2 (Mar 1971) 75¢

COVEN 13

(1969–70) [Camelot Publishing Company]

v1#1 (Sep 1969) 60¢

v1#2 (Nov 1969) 60¢

v1#3 (Jan 1970) 60¢ / Listed in indicia as v1#2

v1#4 (Mar 1970) 60¢

FEAR!

(1960) [Great American Publications, Inc.]

v1#1 (May 1960) 35¢

v1#2 (Jul 1960) 35¢

THE HAUNT OF HORROR

(1973) [Marvel Comics Group]

v1#1 (Jun 1973) 75¢

v1#2 (Aug 1973) 75¢

MAGAZINE OF HORROR

(1963–71) [Acme Publishing/Health Knowledge, Inc.]

v1#1 (Aug 1963) 50¢
v1#2 (Nov 1963) 50¢
v1#3 (Feb 1964) 50¢
v1#4 (May 1964) 50¢
v1#5 (Sep 1964) 50¢
v1#6 (Nov 1964) 50¢
v2#1/#7 (Jan 1965) 50¢
v2#2/#8 (Apr 1965) 50¢
v2#3/#9 (Jun 1965) 50¢
v2#1/#7 (Jan 1965) 50¢
v2#2/#8 (Apr 1965) 50¢
v2#3/#9 (Jun 1965) 50¢
v2#4/#10 (Aug 1965) 50¢
v2#5/#11 (Nov 1965) 50¢
v2#6/#12 (Winter 1965) 50¢
v3#1/#13 (Summer 1966) 50¢
v3#2/#14 (Winter 1966) 50¢
v3#3/#15 (Spring 1967) 50¢
v3#4/#16 (Summer 1967) 50¢
v3#5/#17 (Fall 1967) 50¢
v3#6/#18 (Nov 1967) 50¢
v4#1/#19 (Jan 1968) 50¢
v4#2/#20 (Mar 1968) 50¢
v4#3/#21 (Jan 1968) 50¢
v4#4/#22 (Jul 1968) 50¢
v4#5/#23 (Sep 1968) 50¢
v4#6/#24 (Nov 1968) 50¢
v5#1/#25 (Jan 1969) 50¢
v5#2/#26 (Mar 1969) 50¢
v5#3/#27 (May 1969) 50¢
v5#4/#28 (Jul 1969) 50¢
v5#5/#29 (Sep 1969) 50¢
v5#6/#30 (Dec 1969) 50¢

v6#1/#31 (Feb 1970) 50¢ / Listed in indicia as v6#2
v6#2/#32 (May 1970) 60¢
v6#3/#33 (Summer 1970) 60¢
v6#4/#34 (Fall 1970) 60¢
v6#5/#35 (Feb 1971) 60¢
v6#6/#36 (Apr 1971) 75¢

SHOCK

(1960) [Winston Publications, Inc.]

v1#1 (May 1960) 35¢

v1#2 (Jul 1960) 35¢

v1#3 (Sep 1960) 35¢

SHOCK MYSTERY TALES

(1961–63) [Pontiac Publishing Corp.]

Became magazine size Oct 1962

v1#1 (Dec 1961) 35¢

v2#2 (Mar 1962) 35¢

v2#3 (May 1962) 35¢

v2#4 (Jul 1962) 35¢

v2#5 (Oct 1962) 35¢

v2#6 (Dec 1962) 35¢

v3#1 (Feb 1963) 35¢

STARTLING MYSTERY STORIES

(1966–71) [Acme Publishing/Health Knowledge, Inc.]

v1#1 (Summer 1966) 50¢
v1#2 (Fall 1966) 50¢
v1#3 (Winter 1966/1967) 50¢
v1#4 (Spring 1967) 50¢
v1#5 (Summer 1967) 50¢
v1#6 (Fall 1967) 50¢
v2#1/#7 (Winter 1967) 50¢
v2#2/#8 (Spring 1968) 50¢
v2#3/#9 (Summer 1968) 50¢
v2#4/#10 (Fall 1968) 50¢
v2#5/#11 (Winter 1968) 50¢
v2#6/#12 (Spring 1969) 50¢
v3#1/#13 (Summer 1969) 50¢
v3#2/#14 (Winter 1969) 50¢
v3#3/#15 (Spring 1970) 50¢
v3#4/#16 (Summer 1970) 60¢
v3#5/#17 (Fall 1970) 60¢
v3#6/#18 (Mar 1971) 75¢

WEB TERROR STORIES

(1962–65) [Candar Publishing]

Formerly WEB DETECTIVE STORIES

v4#1 (Aug 1962) 35¢

v4#2 (Nov 1962) 35¢

v4#3 (Mar 1963) 35¢

v4#4 (Nov 1963) 35¢

v4#5 (Aug 1964) 35¢

v4#6 (Nov 1964) 50¢

v5#1 (Feb 1965) 50¢

v5#2 (Jun 1965) 50¢

WEIRD MYSTERY

(1970–71) [Ultimate Publishing Company]

v1#1 (Fall 1970) 50¢

v1#2 (Winter 1970) 50¢

v1#3 (Spring 1971) 60¢

v1#4 (Summer 1971) 60¢

WEIRD TALES

(1973–74) [Renown Publications]

v47#1 (Summer 1973) 75¢

v47#2 (Fall 1973) 75¢

v47#3 (Winter 1973) 75¢

v47#4 (Summer 1974) 75¢

WEIRD TERROR TALES

(1969–70) [Acme Publishing; Health Knowledge, Inc.]

v1#1 (Winter 1969) 50¢

v1#2 (Summer 1970) 60¢

v1#3 (Fall 1970) 60¢

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Shriek!

magazine index (1965–67)

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SHRIEK! v1#1

(May 1965)

Acme News Company, Inc. / 64 pages / 50¢

Editor: Frank N Stein

♦ The Flesh Eaters [Film review]

♦ Two on a Guillotine [Film review]

♦ Black Sabbath [Film review]

♦ Tomb of Ligeia [Film review]

♦ Sovereign of the Sinister [Interview with Vincent Price]

♦ A Day in the Life of a Girl-Vampire [Interview with Isobel Black]

♦ The Terrible Truth about Witchcraft [Film review]

♦ The Secret of Blood Island [Film review]

♦ Horror Hags

♦ Die, Die, My Darling! [Film review]

♦ How I Did It [Interview with Tallulah Bankhead]

♦ Harakiri [Film review]

♦ History of Movie Horror: Part One [Article]

♦ Monster Fun Parade [Photo gallery]

SHRIEK! v1#2

(Oct 1965)

Acme News Company, Inc. / 64 pages / 50¢

Editor: Frank N Stein

♦ Die, Monster, Die! [Film review]

♦ My Life of Terror by Robin Bean [Interview with Boris Karloff]
♦ Dr Terror's House of Horror [Film review]
♦ The Skull [Film review]
♦ Wargods of the Deep [Film review]
♦ My Pound of Flesh Please! [Article]
♦ Devils of Darkness by Lyn Fairhurst [Film review]
♦ Devil Doll [Film review]
♦ Night Is the Phantom by Chris Creed [Film review]
♦ The Night Walker [Film review]
♦ Sovereign of the Sinister [Interview with Vincent Price]

SHRIEK! v1#3

(Summer 1966)

Acme News Company, Inc. / 64 pages / 50¢
Editor: Frank N Stein
♦ The Loneliness of Evil [Interview with Christopher Lee]
♦ Dracula, Prince of Darkness [Film review]
♦ The Face of Fu Manchu [Film review]
♦ Blood Galore [Picture gallery]
♦ The Reptile [Film review]
♦ The Zombie: A to Z [Glossary]
♦ The Plague of the Zombies [Film review]
♦ Onibaba [Film review]
♦ The Psychopath [Film review]
♦ Rasputin, the Mad Monk [Film review]
♦ Monstrous Memories [Photo gallery]

SHRIEK! v1#4

(Winter 1967)

Acme News Company, Inc. / 64 pages / 50¢
Editor: Frank N Stein
♦ It's No Scream [Editorial]
♦ The Projected Man [Film review]
♦ Frankenstein Conquers the World [Film review]
♦ The Mask [Film review]
♦ The Brides of Fu Manchu [Film review]
♦ Morgan, a Suitable Case for Treatment [Film review]
♦ Shriek's Monster Gallery [Photo gallery]

♦ The Deadly Bees [Film review]
♦ Carry on Screaming! [Film review]
♦ 13 [Film review]
♦ Morianna [Film review]
♦ Daleks Invade Earth, 2150 A.D. [Film review]
♦ Munsters Go Home [Photo gallery]
♦ From Dracula to the Gillman by Allan Edgar [Article]
♦ A Few Ways to Go [Photo gallery]

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Warren's *House of Horror* (1978)

.....

HOUSE OF HORROR #1 [Apr 1978]
Warren Publishing Company / 32 pages / 50¢
Publisher: James Warren
Editor in chief: Forrest J Ackerman
♦ The Outer Limits [Article]
♦ Close Encounters Special Effects: 5-Star Cinemiracles [Article]
♦ The Amazing Star Wars Robots [Article]
♦ Creatures of the Watery Deeps by Dennis Billows [Article]
♦ Rare Treats by Forrest J Ackerman [Gallery]

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Mars Attacks!
trading card checklist (1962)

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01 The Invasion Begins
02 Martians Approaching
03 Attacking an Army Base
04 Saucers Blast Our Jets
05 Washington in Flames
06 Burning Navy Ships
07 Destroying the Bridge
08 Terror in Times Square
09 The Human Torch
10 The Skyscraper Tumbles

11 “Destroy the City”
12 Death in the Cockpit
13 Watching from Mars
14 Charred by Martians
15 Saucers Invade China
16 Panic in Parliament
17 Beast and the Beauty
18 A Soldier Fights Back
19 Burning Flesh
20 Crushed to Death
21 Prize Captive
22 Burning Cattle
23 The Frost Ray
24 The Shrinking Ray
25 Capturing a Martian
26 The Tidal Wave
27 The Giant Flies
28 Helpless Victim
29 Death in the Shelter
30 Trapped!!
31 The Monster Reaches In
32 Robot Terror
33 Removing the Victims
34 Terror in the Railroad
35 The Flame Throwers
36 Destroying a Dog
37 Creeping Menace
38 Victims of the Bug
39 Army of Giant Insects
40 High Voltage Execution
41 Horror in Paris
42 Hairy Fiend
43 Blasting the Bug
44 Battle in the Air
45 Fighting Giant Insects
46 Blast Off for Mars
47 Earth Bombs Mars
48 Earthmen Land on Mars

49 The Earthmen Charge
50 Smashing the Enemy
51 Crushing the Martians
52 Giant Robot
53 Martian City in Ruins
54 Mars Explodes
55 Checklist

Mars Attacks! **Homage Subset (1989/1994)**

56 The Garden of Peace
57 Late Night Discovery
58 The Last Picture Show
59 Blasted into Oblivion
60 Unspeakable Experiments
61 Flight of the Doomed
62 Last Licks
63 Common Cause
64 Slaughter in the Suburbs
65 Naked and the Dead
66 Earth Triumphant

……

Wally Wood (1927–81)

selected horror comics & magazines checklist (1950–79)

……

BLUE BOLT WEIRD TALES OF TERROR
(1949–53) [Star Publications]
Formerly BLUE BOLT (1940–49)
Becomes GHOSTLY WEIRD STORIES with #120
#118 (Apr 1953) 10¢

BORIS KARLOFF TALES OF MYSTERY

(1963–80) [Gold Key]

Formerly BORIS KARLOFF THRILLER (1962–63)

#9 (Mar 1969) 12¢

CASTLE OF FRANKENSTEIN

(1962–75) [Gothic Castle Publishing]

#10 (Feb 1966) 35¢

#11/v3#3 (1967) 35¢

#18/v5#2 (1972) 60¢

#21/v6#1 (1974) 75¢

CREEPY

(1964–83) [Warren Publishing]

#9 (Jun 1966) 35¢
#38 (Mar 1971) 60¢
#41 (Sep 1971) 60¢
#48 (Oct 1972) $1.00
#55 (Aug 1973) $1.00
#75 (Nov 1975) $1.00
#78 (Mar 1976) $1.00
#87 (Mar 1977) $1.25
#91 (Aug 1977) $1.50
1969 Yearbook (1968) 50¢

THE CRYPT OF TERROR

(1950) [EC Comics]

Formerly CRIME PATROL (1948–50)

Becomes TALES FROM THE CRYPT with #20

#18 (Jun/Jul 1950) 10¢

DARK MYSTERIES

(1951–55) [Master-Merit Publications]

#1 (Jun 1951) 10¢

#2 (Aug 1951) 10¢

EERIE

(1947–54) [Avon Periodicals]

Becomes STRANGE WORLDS with #18

#2 (Aug/Sep 1951) 10¢

#3 (Oct/Nov 1951) 10¢

#4 (Dec/Jan 1952) 10¢

#5 (Feb/Mar 1952) 10¢

#6 (Apr/May 1952) 10¢

#7 (Jun/Jul 1952) 10¢

#16 (Jun/Jul l954) 10¢

#17 (Aug/Sep 1954) 10¢

EERIE

(1964) [IW Enterprises]

#1 (1964) 10¢

#9 (1964) 10¢

EERIE

(1965–83) [Warren Publishing]

#5 (Sep 1966) 35¢

#11 (Sep 1967) 40¢

#14 (Apr 1968) 40¢

#60 (Sep 1974) $1.25

#61 (Nov 1974) $1.00

FAMOUS FILMS

(1964) [Warren Publishing]

#1 (1964) 35¢

Cover title THE HORROR OF PARTY BEACH

FAMOUS MONSTERS OF FILMLAND

(1958–83) [Warren Publishing]

#58 (Oct 1969) 50¢

WELCOME
TO A NEW KIND OF MAGAZINE!
A PHOTO STORY OF TEENAGE EXCITEMENT, ROMANCE AND MYSTERY!
MASS MURDER SLUMBER PARTY
THE HORROR OF PARTY BEACH

Back cover art by Russ Jones and Wally Wood for Famous Films #1 (1964) Warren Publishing

FORBIDDEN TALES OF DARK MANSION (1972–74) [DC Comics]

Formerly DARK MANSION OF FORBIDDEN LOVE (1971–72)

#13 (Nov/Dec 1973) 20¢

GHOST MANOR SECOND SERIES

(1971–84) [Charlton Comics]

Cover title VISIT GHOST MANOR

#8 (Nov 1972) 20¢

GHOSTLY TALES

(1966–84) [Charlton Comics]

Cover title GHOSTLY TALES FROM THE HAUNTED HOUSE

v8#107 (Oct 1973) 20¢

GHOSTS

(1971–82) [DC Comics]

Formerly GHOST (1971)

#2 (Nov/Dec 1971) 25¢

#40 (Jul 1975) 50¢

THE HAUNT OF FEAR

(1950–54) [EC Comics]

Formerly GUNFIGHTER (1948–50)

v1#15 (May/Jun 1950) 10¢

v1#16 (Jul/Aug 1950) 10¢

v2#4 (Nov/Dec 1950) 10¢

v2#5 (Jan/Feb 1951) 10¢

v2#6 (Mar/Apr 1951) 10¢

THE HOUSE OF MYSTERY

(1951–83) [DC Comics]

#180 (May/Jun 1969) 12¢
#183 (Nov/Dec 1969) 15¢
#184 (Jan/Feb 1970) 15¢
#185 (Mar/Apr 1970) 15¢
#189 (Nov/Dec 1970) 15¢
#199 (Jan/Feb 1972) 25¢
#251 (Mar/Apr 1977) $1.00

HOUSE OF SECRETS

(1956–78) [DC Comics]

#91 (Apr/May 1971) 15¢

#96 (Feb/Mar 1972) 25¢

MONSTER WORLD

[Warren Publishing]

aka FAMOUS MONSTERS OF FILMLAND #70

#1 (Nov 1964) 35¢

MYSTERY COMICS DIGEST

(1972–75) [Gold Key]

#1 (Mar 1972) 50¢

#2 (Apr 1972) 50¢

MYSTIC COMICS

(1951–57) [Atlas/Marvel Comics]

#52 (Oct 1956) 10¢

NIGHTMARE

(1970–75) [Skywald Publishing]
V1#1 (Dec 1970) 50¢

RIPLEY’S BELIEVE IT OR NOT!
(1967–80) [Gold Key]
#80 (Aug 1978) 50¢

RIPLEY’S BELIEVE IT OR NOT! TRUE

GHOST STORIES

(1965–66) [Gold Key]

#1 (Jun 1965) 12¢

SHOCK SUSPENSTORIES

(1952–55) [EC Comics]

#2 (Apr/May 1952) 10¢
#3 (Jun/Jul 1952) 10¢
#4 (Aug/Sep 1952) 10¢
#5 (Oct/Nov 1952) 10¢
#6 (Dec/Jan 1953) 10¢
#7 (Feb/Mar 1953) 10¢
#8 (Apr/May 1953) 10¢
#9 (Jun/Jul 1953) 10¢
#10 (Aug/Sep 1953) 10¢
#11 (Oct/Nov 1953) 10¢
#12 (Dec/Jan 1954) 10¢
#13 (Feb/Mar 1954) 10¢
#14 (Apr/May 1954) 10¢
#15 (Jun/Jul 1954) 10¢

STARTLING TERROR TALES

(1952–54) [Star Publications]

#10 (1952) 10¢

TALES FROM THE CRYPT

(1950–55) [EC Comics]

Formerly THE CRYPT OF TERROR (1950)

#21 (Dec/Jan 1951) 10¢

#24 (Jun/Jul 1951) 10¢

#25 (Aug/Sep 1951) 10¢

#26 (Oct/Nov 1951) 10¢

#27 (Dec/Jan 1952) 10¢

TALES OF TERROR ANNUAL

(1951–53) [EC Comics]

#1 (1951) 25¢

#2 (1952) 25¢

#3 (1953) 25¢

THIS IS SUSPENSE!

(1955) [Charlton Comics]

Formerly STRANGE SUSPENSE STORIES

(1952–54)

Becomes STRANGE SUSPENSE STORIES with #27

#23 (1955) 10¢

TOWER OF SHADOWS

(1969–71) [Marvel Comics]

Becomes CREATURES ON THE LOOSE with

#10 #5 (May 1970) 15¢

#6 (Jul 1970) 15¢

#7 (Sep 1970) 15¢

#8 (Nov 1970) 15¢

UNCANNY TALES

(1952–57) [Atlas/Marvel Comics]

#48 (1956) 10¢

THE UNEXPECTED

(1968–82) [DC Comics]

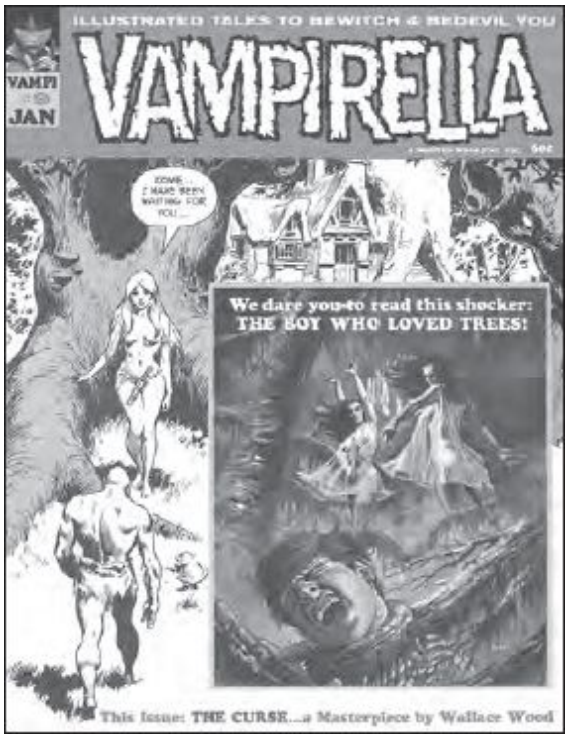
Formerly TALES OF THE UNEXPECTED

(1956–68)

#122 (Dec/Jan 1971) 15¢

#137 (Jul 1972) 20¢

#138 (Aug 1972) 20¢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THE BOY WHO LOVED TREES!
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Cover art by Wally Wood and Boris Vallejo for Vampirella #9 (January 1971) Warren Publishing

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(1969–83) [Warren Publishing]

#9 (Jan 1971) 60¢

#10 (Mar 1971) 60¢

#12 (Jul 1971) 60¢

#19 (Sep 1972) $1.00

#27 (Sep 1973) $1.00

Annual #1 (1972) 75¢

THE VAULT OF HORROR

(1950–55) [EC Comics]

Formerly WAR AGAINST CRIME! (1948–50)

#12 (Apr/May 1950) 10¢

#13 (Jun/Jul 1950) 10¢

WEIRD MYSTERY TALES

[DC Comics]
#23 (Oct 1975) 25¢

WITCHCRAFT

(1952–53) [Avon Periodicals]

#1 (Mar/Apr 1952) 10¢

THE WITCHING HOUR

(1969–78) [DC Comics]

#12 (Jan 1971) 15¢

#15 (Jun 1971) 15¢

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www.barrel-entertainment.com
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Fax: 1-425-438-1832

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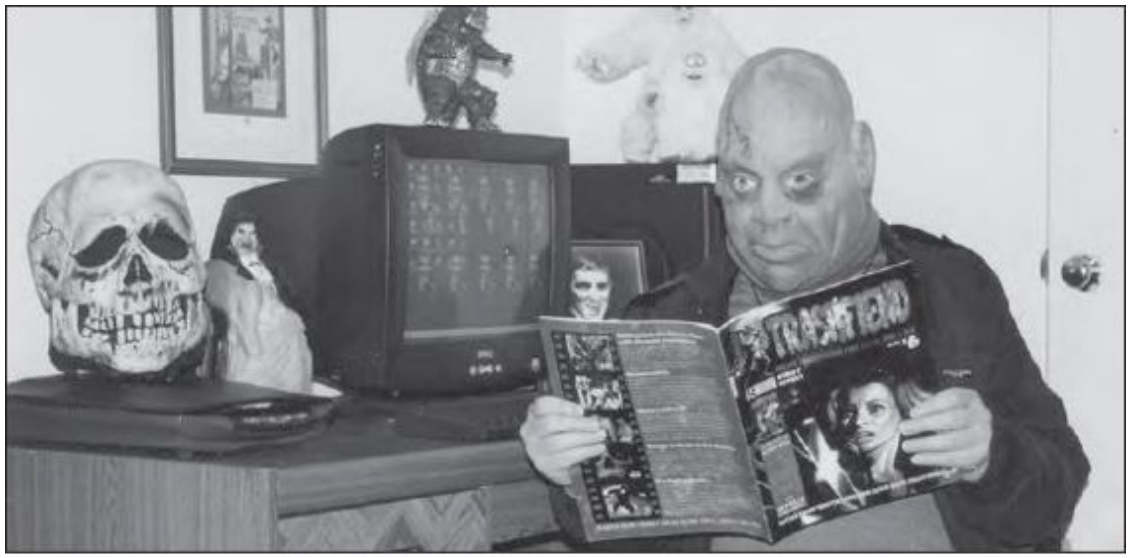

About the Author

WHEN HE'S not moonlighting as a 390 lb. Swedish physicist in low budget horror films, Scott Aaron Stine can be found sitting at his desk, repeatedly bashing his head against the computer monitor.

He is the author of two books devoted to horror films, *The Gorehound's Guide to Splatter Films of the 1960s & 1970s* [McFarland, 2001] and *The Gorehound's Guide to Splatter Films of the 1980s* [McFarland, 2003]. Prior to this, he published numerous magazines, including *Trashfiend* [Stigmata Press, 2002–03], *GICK!* [Stigmata Press, 1998–2001] and *Filthy Habits* [Stigmata Press, 2002–03]. He also published and co-authored *The Trashfiend's Guide to Collecting Videotapes* [Stigmata Press, 2003]. His oft-reprinted article "The Snuff Film:The Making of an Urban Legend," which first appeared in *The Skeptical Inquirer* [CSICOP, May/June 1999], featured in a UK broadcast documentary from Lion Television Ltd.

Under the *nom de plume* of Reginald Bloom, Mr. Stine has had fiction published in such periodicals as *Lovecraft's Weird Mysteries* and *Raw Media Mags,* and in such e-zines as *Crimson, The Art of Horror* and *Chiaroscuro;* his contribution to the latter placed third in the Seventh Chiaroscuro Short Story Contest and was given an honorable mention in *The Year's Best*

Fantasy & Horror [St. Martin's Press, 2002]. Most recently, his work appeared in the anthology *Cold Flesh* [Hellbound Books, 2005].

Mr. Stine also writes, performs and produces music for the post-industrial rock outfit Post-Mortem Pre-Op, the instrumental surf band The Deathshead Virgins, the hardcore metal group Cruciform Rust, and the experimental noise project Uhm… His music has been featured on such CD compilations as *41st Street All Stars* [Everott, 2001] and *Seattle Metal Online: Volume Two* [Seattle Metal Online, 2003].

In what passes as a day job, Scott is also a major collector and dealer of vintage memorabilia, selling through his online business of The Trash Collector. (www.thetrashcollector.com)

In his perpetual defense, Mr. Stine adheres to his trademarked adage of "So Many Bad Films… So Few Brain Cells." He currently resides in Everett, Washington.

films, tv shows, publications / ‘quotation marks’ = short stories & comic strips

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TRASHFIEND

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